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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

THOMAS ALLEN

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THOMAS ALLEN

BY THE

AUTHOR OF 'POST MORTEM'

A. M - Brookfield

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF

THOMAS ALLEN.

CHAPTER I.

A FULL consideration of the anonymous communication I had received, and a careful examination of the letter itself and of the envelope appertaining to it, led me to conclude little more than that I had an enemy in the town of Wolvenden. Who that enemy was I in vain tried to imagine. The handwriting of the letter was laboriously feigned; and the only sentiment

revealed was that of rabid and vulgar animosity. As to the matter contained in the letter, I emphatically believed and trusted that it had no foundation save in the unscrupulously malicious invention of the writer. I lost no time, however, in communicating with my father, to whom I sent the letter, with a full account of the manner in which it had been received, and a request for his assistance and advice. He replied, after rather more delay than I had expected, saying that he had received my letter, also the enclosure, and would consult, "in the proper quarter," as to what had best be done in the matter. He told me that I need feel no uneasiness on the important subject of my birth. "Probably," he wrote, "the scamp has got hold of an old story, which you have heard yourself, about my running away with your

mother; and if so, he knows that you are young, and means, first to work upon your fears, and then to try and extort money. If you happen to clap hands on him, well and good; but, pray, don't let anything come before the public, unless you are absolutely compelled. I wish heartily that we could have had the benefit of poor Sutcliffe's advice. He would have assisted with the greatest goodwill possible, and would have perhaps discovered what puzzles me completely—viz., *who* your anonymous correspondent can be. Have not you any notion whatever yourself? There must be many men in the regiment, I mean private soldiers, who may have picked up something about our affairs; and one of them may owe you a grudge for some punishment you gave him. We will have a good talk about all this when you come home again."

I was not altogether satisfied with this letter. I had expected him to be more indignant at the insult offered to our family; and I had certainly looked for a rather more emphatic denial of the odious allegation which had been made. On the whole, however, I did feel reassured. I had heard, though I was only now reminded of the fact, that my parents had been married in an unusual manner—at Gretna Green, or elsewhere—in the first instance, but that they had also been more formally united shortly afterwards. One phrase, moreover, that my father used in his letter, nearly made amends for all that he omitted; for he spoke of "consulting in the proper quarter," and I knew by this that he intended to confer with his brother, my uncle Thomas, than whom he had no better friend or adviser.

I will now return to other matters. My arrest—my incarceration in the hotel—was not of long duration. Those subalterns, including myself, who were prisoners for the part they had taken in the midnight fray, were speedily reprimanded and set at liberty. Captain Solomon I saw no more; and an announcement to the effect that he had resigned his commission appeared shortly afterwards in the 'Gazette.' As to the sad truth that he was first systematically made to drink, and then deliberately permitted to disgrace himself, it merely illustrates the scandalous and unworthy shifts to which gentlemen are sometimes reduced, when they find thrust into their society persons with whom they would never associate, and whom they would certainly never molest, could they be given any choice or any voice in the matter.

I shall not devote much further space to my experiences in the militia. As the period of our training drew to a close, I realised that I should soon have to revert from the dignity of manhood to the sunken condition of a schoolboy; in other words, that I should have to return to Mr Skelton. I then began to see some advantages in abandoning the army altogether so as to follow some nominal occupation, such as that of a briefless barrister. Ascough, the surgeon, urged me not to forsake the militia, in which he declared I was excellently fitted for a career. "Besides," said he, "who knows where we may find ourselves in this San Juan affair? And, pray, what is the Government going to do about China?" Several others asked me why I could not be content with the life of a country gentleman. But that question might have been

best answered by my father, who, for some reasons of his own, was bent upon my following a regular profession. My own resolution as to entering the army wavered, as I have said, but this was only during a brief period; for, just as our training was coming to an end, an incident occurred which rekindled to the highest degree my original enthusiasm.

At the close of the preceding volume I mentioned a certain troop of cavalry, of which I just caught a glimpse as it was leaving Wolvenden. This troop formed part of a regiment of hussars, then on the march, the main body of which soon afterwards halted in the town for one night. The society of the officers, whom we entertained at our mess, delighted me beyond measure; for, though they were not all of them learned and accomplished men, still,

one had lost an eye, and another had been wounded in the arm, in the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava. I resolved, forthwith, that this should be my regiment, if either interest or exèrtion could procure me the distinction. So, having returned to my home, I begged my uncle to bestir himself in the matter. Then, without further delay, I hastened back into the bondage of Mr Skelton, who at once began to cram me in real earnest; and though he was himself somewhat preoccupied in learning the Swedish language, he devoted extra time to pushing forward my preparation, with what success will presently appear.

Our examination was conducted at Chelsea Hospital, and a medical scrutiny commenced the proceedings. One candidate being found to possess, in all, only seven

toes, was rejected; but other kinds of defects were more indulgently treated.

One individual whom the doctors examined, at first answered all their interrogations with smiles, bows, or shakes of the head; and this having aroused their suspicions, they very frankly desired him to speak. After a long and painful silence he contrived to say "that he was rather nervous." In fact he had what I may call an intermittent impediment in his speech, but he was allowed to pass; and he distinguished himself in the examination by his thorough acquaintance with the dead languages. The most prevalent defect was that of short-sightedness. One youth was shown seven black balls printed on a card, and asked how many he saw. He answered "twelve," upon which the doctor told him to use his eye-glass; which he did, and

then guessed "nine." He was, however, saved from rejection by the humanity of a bystander, who came to his assistance by holding up seven fingers. After the medical scrutiny we went into a large hall, and were each allotted a number.

The next day our examination was commenced. We were distributed at tables to which wooden barricades were fastened, so that each one's papers should be hidden from the eyes of his neighbour. Upon the second day of the examination a reduction was made in our number by the removal of a young man who had been found consulting a dictionary. His excuse was a very ingenuous one: "I was only looking for a thing I could have looked out before I came in, only I hadn't time," said he.

When we adjourned each day for luncheon, I generally went to some chambers

belonging to my uncle Thomas, who was always glad to see me. But one day some of my fellow-pupils from Mr Skelton's proposed that we should go and eat luncheon with a certain very civil well-dressed tailor, who stood bowing to us as we came out, and who invited us to enter his carriage, which was in waiting. The chief inducement that he offered to us in accepting his hospitality, was that we should meet Mr Skelton at his house. Five of us having agreed to go, we were taken to the tailor's house, or shop, where we found our tutor and a few others seated in a handsomely furnished room. We were presently treated to a meal which positively included turtle; and Mr Skelton informed us, while we were eating, how, judging from our own accounts, we had each done. He also gave us some advice with regard

to the papers which were still to come; and in doing this, rather surprised me by the cynical candour which he displayed. "You'll do, I think," he said to me; "but you'd better take in these two propositions of Euclid; they're almost sure to be given."

I was not long left in doubt as to the motives of our host the tailor, in thus entertaining us. Before letting me depart, he begged me to promise him the order for my outfit. Having already conferred this distinction upon my own tailor, I was able to refuse; but my host cajoled me into being measured for two suits of clothes, for which he implored me to be in no hurry to pay him. He added, that if I was at any time in want of money he should be most happy to supply me with it; "and I can put it down, you see," he explained, "as so much that you've had

of us in clothes." Having thanked him heartily for his goodness, I made my escape; and I afterwards learnt that no less than three of his guests, on that occasion alone, had promised him the order for their outfits, which no doubt may have helped him to pay for his turtle. I did not again avail myself of this wary individual's hospitality, though he every day proffered it. As soon as the examination was ended I returned to Hare Place, where I anxiously awaited news of the result.

I must now turn, in accordance with my plan, to a further consideration of the affairs of Mrs Frank Chobham, formerly Miss Helena Sutcliffe.

CHAPTER II.

I MENTIONED the fact that when Mr Chobham was wooing Helena, the melancholy looks which prospered his suit were really the result of his having been lately rejected by a young lady in Italy. Of this young lady, who was called Miss Bertha Dean, Helena had only casually heard; and she was still completely ignorant that her husband had ever been the suitor of any one but herself, when he one day entered the room, exclaiming, "What infernal mischief she has done!"

"Who, my dear?" his wife inquired.

"Oh! my mother, my mother," answered he.

He then threw himself into a chair, and began to write a letter; tore the letter up, and commenced a second; then ground his teeth and struck his forehead. He sometimes indulged in such antics merely in order to excite interest, or to demand compassion; but on this occasion he was almost involuntarily demonstrating the great annoyance which he felt.

Helena presently left her occupation, and, coming to her husband's side, again asked him, in the most affectionate manner, what was the cause of his distress and what his mother had done. For some time he made no reply; but then, with extraordinary abruptness, he asked his wife, "whether they were not as badly suited to one another as it was possible for any two people to be?"

This question may have caused Helena considerable pain, yet she answered, in a spirited, half-playful manner, that no people who were once married ought ever to suppose that they were badly suited; that, for her part, she always studied his happiness, though she feared she did not always do her duty.

Here he interrupted her, and said: "Yes, my dear, I know you always think you are doing your duty, and that I never do mine, but that isn't the point. What I say is, are we naturally the least bit suited to each other?"

When he had pursued this interesting theme for about ten minutes, Helena began to weep, upon which Chobham complained that she had given him a headache, and retired to his room.

For several days afterwards he was

gloomy and irritable to an unusual extent, and his wife could extract no explanation of the cause. At last he sent for his mother, as he often did when he meditated taking an important step. His first business with her was to make her humble herself for having, as he considered, done him a most grievous wrong.

This supposed injury I will explain at once, and so save unnecessary mystery. Just as Chobham was about to be married, Mrs Dean, the mother of the former mistress of his heart in Italy, ignorant of what was about to take place, wrote a long letter to old Mrs Chobham, saying that her daughter Bertha was in a very disconsolate state, and might, she thought, be induced to revoke her former decision, if Mr Chobham would only promise to live in Italy instead of in England. I have

heard that when Mrs Chobham received this letter she paused in her preparations for the wedding, and pondered whether she should reveal the matter to her son. She probably reflected that, while on the one hand he might prove too high-minded to give up Helena, and on the other hand might find no scruple in doing so, in either case much unhappiness must ensue. Helena was a good girl, had a large fortune, and he was bound in honour to marry her; the lady in Italy was consumptive, had no fortune, and should have spoken before. From some considerations such as these Mrs Chobham decided to let matters take their course, and accordingly she told her son nothing.

But now, more than a year having elapsed, he unfortunately met Mrs Dean in London, where, unaccompanied by her

daughter, she was making a brief stay; and from her he unfortunately heard of the letter and its momentous contents; whereupon, overcome by the bitterness of his selfish reflections, he returned home, and there, without any regard either to honour or to good taste, agitated his wife in the manner described. He then sent for his mother, and upbraided her for what she had done. She, although able to console herself with the reflection that, from one point of view at least, she had acted very properly, only acknowledged with remorse that she was the cause of her dear son's misery. The affectionate couple, being agreed on this point, next debated as to finding a remedy. At first they could think of none, and my informant in this matter has never heard by what arguments they came to embrace the expedient event-

ually adopted by them, which was that Chobham should proceed to Italy, in order "to see something" of Miss Bertha Dean. His mother, in proposing this arrangement, or in sanctioning it, seems to have stipulated that she should go with him, to assist him in acting with propriety.

They departed to Rome, taking with them Helena, as a necessary encumbrance. The two families in due course met; the interesting experiment of Mr Chobham and his mother was at once given a trial, and, from Chobham's point of view, met with perfect success. He soon became less querulous, more reasonable, apparently less selfish, and in fact more contented and happy. His wife, who was not wanting in acuteness, perceived that this change had been wrought by the fair Bertha; and possessing wisdom as well as acuteness, she endeavoured to

profit by the example thus shown to her, and betrayed not the least signs of jealousy in her behaviour to Miss Dean. Indeed it is a most remarkable fact that a tolerably sincere friendship continued to exist between the two ladies, though it is not easy to say whether the bond which drew them together was the love or the contempt which they each felt towards the same object. As long as Chobham merely became less intolerable than usual, Helena allowed herself to be tormented by no indignant suspicions. For not only had she a disposition quite free from jealousy, but in the actual case of her husband, she had sorrowfully come to the conclusion that, either by nature or in consequence of the severe accident which had befallen him, he had no heart, in the common acceptation of the term; and therefore she had no fear of being sup-

planted in his affections. In fact, whenever she saw her husband apparently enjoying himself in Miss Dean's society, instead of thinking "He cares for her more than for me," she used to say to herself—"He cares for her no more than he cares for me, or for any one else in the world."

But this state of affairs could not very long continue, nor did it; and though Mr Chobham's former transaction with Miss Dean was not revealed to Helena at this time, she at length, for herself, made the mortifying discovery that her husband did possess some kind of a heart, and that he had bestowed it all upon Bertha. At first when her husband in his abstraction now and then addressed her as "Bertha," she merely laughed at him; but when he had repeated this mistake many times, always showing confusion as he did so, and when,

moreover, he had once or twice made some very strange observations in his sleep, Helena became fully alive to the fact that her unhappiness and her humiliation were even more complete than she had supposed. But this new grief was not one which she conceived it her duty to endure without resistance. After seeking and obtaining consolation by a means which she had scarcely ever known to fail, she went to Mrs Chobham the elder, and having meekly complained of the position in which she found herself placed, requested the good offices of the old lady.

The latter, aroused to a full though tardy perception of the mischief which she had promoted, proceeded to act with commendable decency and prudence. The Deans, whom the conspiracy had throughout embarrassed rather than gratified, were in-

stantly despatched to another part of Italy; and when Chobham proposed to follow them, his mother firmly and successfully opposed the project. He, thinking himself one of the most ill-used men in the world, resigned for the present the comparative bliss which had so tantalised him, and returned, with a secret protest, but with unconcealed regret, to a formal allegiance to his gentle and unoffending wife.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER waiting with impatience to know the result of my examination, I one day heard to my great joy that I had passed. My father, having congratulated me upon this success, now approached the subject of the allowance which he should give me in the army. I told him that I thought £1000 a-year would be a comfortable income. He said that he quite agreed with me, but that he had no intention of annually depriving himself of any such sum for my enjoyment. In the end he informed me that I should have "a clear start" and £500 per annum; and he also

told me that he hoped to purchase me my steps of promotion as far as the rank of captain, but that then I might have to shift for myself. I was delighted with the prospect thus opened to me, and told my father "that £500 a-year would be ample, for that I intended to be very economical." He said that he trusted I should never be extravagant, and that he wished me to consider the army my profession. He reminded me, at the same time, of a circumstance which then occasioned me very little concern — namely, that his landed property would not necessarily pass into my hands. "If our anonymous friend," he said, laughing, "could hear that there was a doubt of your inheriting Hare Place, he would try to make something of it. But there isn't a doubt, humanly speaking; I only choose to do things in my

own way, on perfectly sound business principles."

My father was fond of speaking of "sound business principles," but it was well known that the principles upon which he usually conducted his own business were anything but sound. Our investigations into the affair of the anonymous letter to which he referred had ended in nothing. He had suggested that the writing of the letter was "a clumsy practical joke." My uncle, as a man of the world, had come to the conclusion that nothing was to be done at present, and that by doing nothing we should very likely encourage the mysterious correspondent into doing too much, and thus placing himself in our power. For my own part, I was for a time disposed to suspect the unfortunate Philip Graham. I had little reason or excuse for so doing;

and having ascertained that Philip had been playing the part of King Lear in a market town far distant from Wolvenden at the time when the letter had been sent, I decided that my suspicion of him was purely fanciful and entirely unjustifiable. There the matter rested; for as to the allegation contained in the anonymous letter, my father and my uncle treated it as so preposterous that I was ashamed of having suffered even a passing pang of doubt on the subject.

My father having promised to give me a fair start, I proceeded, "on sound business principles," to amass on credit, a great many articles of ornament, luxury, and convenience—as, for instance, a supply of boots and shoes which would have served the purposes of at least seven less ambitious lads; clothes in the same profusion, in great

variety of stripe and check; coloured prints, such as "Going to the meet," "Run to earth," "Tally-ho!" &c.; a wretched painting of Tom Sayers; another of Thormanby, winner of the Derby; and a portrait of Taglioni, whom I had never seen and had scarcely heard of. My uncle, the colonel, at this time had many serious conversations with me on the subject of extravagance—a folly against which he was much given to inveighing. Though a younger son, he had fortunately been bequeathed, late in his career and from an unexpected source, a very handsome fortune; but he was never tired of telling me that when he had entered the Guards as an ensign and lieutenant he had been allowed only £150 a-year. He never mentioned the circumstance that he had annually spent about ten times that sum.

After a long and most unnecessary delay,

I was one day gazetted to the corps for which I had longed; and having been granted two months' leave, I soon surrounded myself with such an array of gold-laced jackets, saddles, spurs, and new barrack furniture, as really gladdened my heart and filled every one else with wonder, admiration, or hatred. I began to receive a good deal of attention. Our vicar very gravely consulted me upon the military resources of the country, and afterwards quoted my utterances, though whether with respect or in irony I did not hear. The master of the hounds, who had himself served in the cavalry, now treated me very graciously. His good-nature so pleased me, that one day, thinking to earn his applause, I sent on my brown horse to the meet, about eight miles distant, and drove to cover with my mother's barouche and pair, — which

only made him exclaim, "Good gracious! in my time cornets would hack out twenty miles!" And he asked me more than once, in the course of the day, "What have you done with the bathing-machine?"

At length I left my home, and, accompanied by the faithful brown horse just referred to, proceeded to Aldershot, and there commenced my new career. A sham fight was taking place when I arrived, and the barracks were almost deserted. Nevertheless I found the quartermaster, who was the person it then chiefly behoved me to see, and we were presently joined by another officer.

The latter was a tall, handsome man, of very martial appearance. He was attired in a blue frock-coat, decorated with several ribbons; a forage-cap, mainly supported by his right ear; and a pair of booted overalls. I should have certainly taken him for either

a colonel or a major; only, mindful of the mistake I had once made with respect to Ascough, I mistrusted my imagination, and indeed asked myself whether this might not also be the regimental surgeon. He was very communicative upon general subjects, and talked especially of some races which were soon to take place, but it never seemed to occur to him to tell me who he himself was. Presently, having taken me into the mess, he rang the bell, and said to the servant who came, "I wish you'd look if you can see Curtis about anywhere, and just tell him to saddle that bay horse in Captain Ponds's stable and bring him round here. Tell him to look *slippy* about it."

He then explained to me that the horse in question was a positive treasure of his kind, but that unfortunately he could not afford to keep him. "I have more nags

than I quite know what to do with at present," said he, laughing. And he then added, in a dreamy, musing tone, "He's such a fine upstanding horse! I can always thoroughly rely on him. I've ridden him out to cover sixteen miles and then hunted him, many a time, and he's always been as fresh as paint the next morning! He's what I call a 'confidential' horse, though he's only a four-year-old. He makes such a grand charger too,—just the sort of horse a young fellow could go through the school and get dismissed on, don't you know."

"Why don't you sell him?" asked I.

"Sell him!" said the officer. "O Lord! but he suits me to perfection. You see he's a *confidential* horse,—that's why I don't like parting with him. He carries me everywhere and over anything. Still, if

any one was to offer me a hundred and fifty guineas for him I'd take it, as I'm a poor man."

The horse in question was now brought round to the door, and his appearance, so far as I could judge, was not out of keeping with the high character he had received. His master patted his neck, and told me that his children took the horse pieces of sugar every morning. Just as I had heard this droll circumstance related, the roll of kettle-drums was heard close at hand, and the guard turned out. My mysterious companion then mounted in some haste, and saying, "We shall meet again," briskly trotted out of sight.

Soon after this, the regiment having returned from the field, I was summoned to "the office," or, as I had been accustomed to call it, "the orderly room." There I

found Colonel Rush, the commanding officer, seated in a chair writing. He was a very grave-looking, soldier-like man, and before noticing me, he finished the writing in which he was engaged. As soon as he had greeted me and asked after my uncle, whom he knew, he inquired "what I was going to do about horses?"

"I have one, rather a good one," answered I; "but I should like to keep him for a hunter."

"Oh yes, keep him for a hunter, and get a few more by all means," said the colonel, laughing. He then added that he had referred to chargers. "I suppose," he said, "that you haven't heard of any that would be likely to suit you?"

"I saw one this morning, sir," I replied, "that I think would do very well, belonging to some one in the regiment."

"To some one in the regiment!" repeated Colonel Rush; and turning to the adjutant, who was there, he asked, "What horse would that be, Lovier?"

"I think he must mean that horse of Mr Joiner's, sir," answered the adjutant.

"Good heavens!" said the colonel, "not that beast of a bay! Send the orderly over to the infirmary, and tell Mr Joiner I wish to speak to him." Returning to me, he told me to take no step in the matter of choosing horses before he had seen me again.

I shall have to show, in the course of a few more chapters, that this matter of choosing horses chanced to have an important bearing on my happiness.

CHAPTER IV.

CIVILIANS, or "ordinary people," as some of them prefer to be called, are very rightly under the impression that the first lesson a soldier has to learn is that of obedience. But I would take this opportunity of pointing out, that the obedience in question does not so much consist in obeying military words of command,—such as "March!" or "Right-about-face!"—as it consists in giving a wise, prudential submission to authority exercised in all kinds of small matters at other times than when on parade. Indeed it hardly ever enters the head of a recruit to disobey the word of

command, if he can but understand it; and as for trained soldiers, I have heard of instances of their being so anxious to perform their duty that they have themselves suggested the word of command which their officer, out of his extraordinary delicacy, hesitated to give them.

When I first joined my regiment, I received a very liberal education in the real art of submission. I was fined enough champagne to have lasted a workhouse infirmary a couple of hundred years. I was made to join in every sort of scheme, whether of sport, philanthropy, or mischief. I was always given the honour of representing the regiment at dinners or balls, especially when they took place in remote parts of the camp. I was constantly deprived of my proper allowance of sleep, yet always expected to be wide awake. At the same

time, I was fully occupied with drills of sundry kinds, and lessons in the riding-school. Also, if I ever dared to express any other sentiment than that of satisfaction at the life I was leading, I was reminded that I was a hussar, and that the hardships I complained of were in fact hussar-like pleasures. But I had a fine constitution and an equable temper; and these two advantages, together with a constant enthusiasm for my profession, carried me safely through an ordeal which to some young men would have been intolerable.

My captain was a gentleman of the name of Dubblemore, who having himself been formerly instructed in the art of submission with a good deal of severity, now took his revenge by treating his juniors to the same sort of discipline he had received. The process of keeping "us cornets," as he called

us, in a suitable condition of humility, he styled "wheeling us into line;" and though he neglected to teach me himself any of the military duties which I had to discharge, I certainly learnt from him, more than from any one else, the soldier's first duty, in the true and practical sense of the term.

I now have to relate a very strange discovery which I made about two weeks after joining my regiment. It is necessary first to describe the occasion. One night, most of the officers having gone to London, the party at mess was very small, consisting only of the assistant-surgeon, Slake (the senior lieutenant), a cornet of the name of Dobson, and myself. Slake once asked me, during the meal, "Why I looked so beastly sleepy?"

When I admitted that I was rather tired, he said, "Tired, be blowed! You aren't half a sportsman!"

At ten o'clock, however, he himself retired to bed, taking with him his meerschaum pipe, and a work called 'Handley Cross.' Dobson and the assistant-surgeon then went off to play at billiards, and I determined to execute a long-designed scheme for enjoying a good night's rest. I left the mess, and having climbed three flights of stairs, entered my well-furnished room, and was soon in bed and asleep.

But, meantime, a telegram had been received, saying that the commander-in-chief was coming to Aldershot the next day; and in consequence of this news, the officers who were on leave were all recalled, and they entered the mess a few minutes after I had left it. I was aroused from my happy slumbers by being pulled out of bed. I was carried down-stairs by several men, whose faces I could not distinguish in the dark.

They conveyed me very carefully across the barrack-square. Besides allowing me to retain my night-shirt, they had given me some slippers; and when one of the slippers fell off, it was immediately replaced on my foot.[1] My journey ended at the mess. There I was brought before a tribunal of subalterns, and arraigned upon several charges framed in military language—the principal charge being, "Disgraceful conduct in having gone to bed."

I was found guilty, and sentenced to sing a song, and then to treat every one present to champagne. I hastened to perform my punishment; and while the wine was being brought, I left the room in order to put on some clothes. One of my considerate judges, I found, had anticipated my inten-

[1] To this an historical parallel may be found in the popular account of the Porteous riots, A.D. 1736.

tion, for my clothes were already prepared for me in a sort of pantry close at hand. A man, apparently one of the mess-waiters, though I had certainly never noticed him before, stood waiting to assist me. I sat down in a chair, and he handed me a pair of boot-hooks. I took the boot-hooks in my hand, and then started violently, as people very seldom do start in real life. "What's your name?" I asked him.

"Blacker, sir; of D troop," answered he.

"Blacker!" repeated I; "*White, you mean!*"

It was indeed my father's old favourite; the gouty footman; the student of Gibbon and of Burton. To describe the effect which this surprising recognition first made on my mind, I can use no juster and no less hackneyed phrase than this — viz.,

that I felt as if I were dreaming. As for White himself, and he did not attempt to deny his identity, he seemed overpowered with embarrassment, rather than with pleasure or any emotion of that kind. He presently stammered out—

"I hope the squire's pretty well; and your mamma."

"Yes, thank you," answered I, beginning to dress myself; "but how the deuce did you come to enlist?"

"I got into trouble, sir," White replied; "at least, a young woman threw me over. I joined at Leeds, the year before last. Captain Ponds was going to have made me a lance-corporal, but I had to go into hospital; and now I've had to wait in the mess for the last six weeks as they're short of one man, and they know I've been in service."

"But I've never seen you here before," said I.

"No, sir," said he, adding, "I went into hospital the day you joined; and I only came out yesterday."

I then asked him why he had not sent to tell me that he was serving in the same regiment; and why, above all, he had not acquainted my father with his circumstances. For I did not believe that White had enlisted out of any martial enthusiasm on his part.

He answered all my questions by saying that he had desired, and still desired, his identity to be unknown. "She broke my heart," he said, with a sorrowful glance; "and I wish the world not to know where I've hidden my diminished head."

At that moment my name was loudly called; and having now completed my

attire, I left the pretended Blacker and returned to the ante-room.

The distinguished company assembled there had been increased during my absence by the arrival of two or three captains, including Dubblemore. He drank my health when I came in, and said, with a smile, "Well, cornet; so they tell me they had to '*fall in the escort*' for you."[1] Though not

[1] The sort of practical joking recorded above is generally kept within reasonable bounds, and does little or no harm. As to rougher variations of the same practice, however, organised attempts to expel a man from his regiment, they often cause mischief in more ways than one; and yet, their occurrence could be rendered wholly impossible, by a simple piece of legislation, rather urgently needed. The alteration which expediency demands is in the method of granting first appointments. As it is, almost any person can obtain a commission in almost any regiment. Under the purchase system this objection existed, though in a much smaller degree; but now, not only is the entrance to the army made wider for the admission of those classes of officers with whose services it is incontestably desirable to dispense (the Maltese, for example), but the entrance is made narrower for that

perfectly sober, he was evidently pleased, and from that time forth he was good enough to honour me with his friendship and intimacy; nor was I molested any more by the others, for my probationary term was considered to have come to an end.

class of officers whose services it is indisputably desirable to encourage and retain; and these latter, instead of being fairly distributed throughout the army, are constrained to crowd together into the Guards, and other select corps, or else to avoid service in the army. These circumstances conduce to inefficiency, not to the public good, and the proper remedy is to be found in a judicious revival of the nomination system; or, if a more radical method be preferred, in the establishment of the regimental ballot for the admission of candidates into any corps.

CHAPTER V.

I MUST now again turn aside to the affairs of Mr and Mrs Chobham, to which a great climax was at hand. Although Mr Chobham had given up the pursuit of Miss Bertha Dean at the request of his mother, whose advice he was accustomed to follow, and not from his own considerations of honour or propriety, he nevertheless assumed to himself great credit for his conduct; and, as if to show his wife that he bore her no malice, he soon re-employed her, as before, in reading travels and voyages to him. He now made a stipulation, that during the performance of her task she

was on no account to ask him whether he was sleepy. "I close my eyes sometimes," said he, "just to listen better; and then it bothers me if you ask if I'm sleepy. Then, sometimes I shut my eyes because I really am drowsy, and then it wakes me up if you begin asking questions: do you see?"

Helena said that she did see; and I may here observe that she was restrained from rebelling against her husband's ill treatment, not only by her very rigorous notion of what her duty was, but also from the fear of making him ill; for the doctors had said that he must, on no account, be excited.

The prospect before her was indeed disheartening; but Chobham himself presently relieved the monotony of her martyrdom by making occasional visits to London, accompanied by his valet, who also acted

as his nurse. Chobham went to London in search of distraction, rather than amusement; and more especially to play whist at his club. He was still not allowed to mount a horse; nor to shoot (except from a bath-chair), so that it was not wonderful that he began to cultivate some other amusement. Some of his old friends, too, had asked him why he never played whist, and had said: "It is the very thing for you; we have a rubber every night." He generally remained away from his wife for periods of three days at a time. She at first hinted that she would be glad to accompany him in his expeditions, but he plainly told her that he preferred being alone. To do him justice, however, while he was thus seeking distraction after his own fashion, he did not at all discourage his wife in passing her own leisure in whatever

way might please her; and it was with his consent that she began to busy herself in plans for rebuilding Colling Hall, her old home which had been destroyed by fire.

Strange to say, however, she was not content with this state of affairs, but tried to bring about a compromise by entering into her husband's new pursuit, and endeavouring to make him follow it in his own home, and in her company. She purchased a treaty upon whist, over which she pored with the greatest diligence, and then boldly asked her husband to give her lessons. With tolerable good-humour he consented, and made his wife very happy upon three or four occasions, when, having invited a few people to dinner, they managed to play a rubber afterwards. But these visitors, who were only occasional whist-players, played very badly; and so,

to own the truth, did poor Helena. Therefore, when the guests had departed, Mr Chobham used to observe, mournfully, to her, "I say, my dear, you really do play so badly." And he would then point out, at some length, the errors which she had committed in the game. She bore his reproaches meekly and cheerfully; telling him "that she knew it must be very aggravating, when he was such a beautiful player." But he did not receive her excuses well, and at last told her, very gravely, that he could play with her no more; that he did not mind her playing so miserably, inasmuch as that was her misfortune and not her fault, but that what he did dislike was, that by having to practise with such an indifferent player, he was himself deteriorating in skill.

"You see," Chobham one day observed,

"I shan't be able to hold my own very soon; shall I? Why, of course I shan't."

Therefore Helena's scheme failed, and her husband began to go to London even more often than before, and for longer periods. At his club in London he met with Mr Garbold, whom I have already described. The latter had just been round the world, and, as a traveller, at once attracted Chobham's regard.

Mr Garbold was in turn drawn towards his new friend by curiosity, and the belief that Chobham was a cynic. The two became somewhat intimate, and at length Helena's husband returned from one of his expeditions with Mr Garbold at his side. Helena was pleased; for not only did she occasionally pine for more society, but she had long been hoping that her husband might discover some inducement to remain

at home, even though she might not attract him herself. Mr Garbold, as I shall show when I return to my personal adventures, had only recently heard that Chobham was married at all, and he was all the more astonished when he found to what sort of a person he was married. Professing to believe that all women were in the end equally bad, and unworthy of respect, Mr Garbold would not at first give way to the conviction that there was at least one who was an exception to the rule. But his acuteness and honesty were in this instance stronger than his prejudices, and he was soon forced to acknowledge that his hostess Mrs Chobham was a pattern of the best and rarest kind of virtue. When he had once made this admission to himself, he reverenced Helena from the bottom of his heart, and proceeded to treat her with a degree of out-

ward respect which, from any one but himself, he would have considered ridiculous.

The conduct and even the character of Mr Chobham at this time seemed to have completely changed. He appeared to have come to the conclusion that he was too exacting a companion for Helena; and that she required "distraction," just as he did. He relieved her altogether of her duties as reader; and told her that though he was too unwell himself to entertain Mr Garbold, yet that she would do very well in his place. For some days Helena found Mr Garbold thrust on her hands as if he had been a young lady placed under her protection. This was really not his fault, for his devotion to her was so honest, that he would have kept out of her sight all his life if she had expressed a wish to that effect. But as it was, on the con-

trary, he was constantly informed "that he amused Mrs Chobham." Chobham constantly found excuses for withdrawing himself, and leaving his wife to entertain Mr Garbold; and occasionally he plainly showed that he either wished them to be together, or else wished to be alone himself.

Once, complaining of pain in his knee, he sent off Helena to take Mr Garbold for a walk. As they were returning, they descried on the top of a neighbouring hill a procession which proved to consist of a boy dragging a bath-chair, and in it Chobham, his gun, and a number of dead rabbits.

It was this particular incident which made Mr Garbold, after an examination of the position of affairs, resolve to bring his visit to a close. He had been with Chobham for nearly a fortnight, when

he one day announced his intention of departing the following day. Mr Chobham, after vainly begging him to prolong his stay, asked him to remain at least one day longer than he proposed, for that then they would both go to London together. To this arrangement Garbold assented.

The next day,—that is, the day before the proposed departure — Chobham suggested that they should all visit a fair which was being held at a place some sixteen miles distant. Although, considering the state of Mr Chobham's health, and the primitive nature of the amusement to be obtained, the proposal seemed rather extravagant, Helena at once consented.

As soon as breakfast was ended, she ran and attired herself in the most becoming dress that she possessed, and came downstairs, ready for the expedition. Then, a

blow which hardly any one in the world would have expected, and for which she herself, with all her special experience, was not prepared, descended. Chobham complained of twitches in the back; said that he could not come; and desired Helena and Mr Garbold to go without him. This they each refused to do, and Chobham morosely retired to his study. Thither, in the ordinary course of such things, he was followed by his wife, and the result of the interview was, that she stated her willingness to do as he commanded, and declined his ironical proposal that she should take her maid with her.

She next sought out Mr Garbold, and with an unavailing attempt at cheerfulness, requested him, as a personal favour to herself, to come. Perhaps Mr Garbold should have still declined; he has since said, how-

ever, that he was much disposed to persist in his refusal, but that his desire to be of temporary service to Helena outweighed all the various other considerations which passed through his mind. He agreed to go; and Helena and he, though they disguised their true feelings by conventional words of politeness, perfectly understood each other.

CHAPTER VI.

THE carriage which Mr Chobham had chosen to order for his wife and his guest was a Stanhope phaeton; and the horses were two which Chobham had formerly been in the habit of hunting, but which had of late been driven in harness. Perhaps the reader will now expect to hear of an accident; nor shall he be disappointed, for one of the most extraordinary accidents of which any one ever heard did take place, and I am about to relate it. As Helena left the house her parting words to her husband were "that she hoped he would soon feel better;" while Mr Garbold, remarking that it was a lovely

day, told Chobham that he ought to alter his mind and come with them.

Mr Garbold said this in his accustomed playful tones, and yet, as he did so, he grasped the whip which he held in a rather significant manner. He told me himself a short time afterwards that at that moment, and not before, he had finally come to the conclusion that Chobham was *a hound.* "I knew," said he, "that Mrs Chobham was ever so much too good for him; but I never till then felt exactly certain that he was a hound—*a low hound.*"

While Helena and Mr Garbold traversed the first few miles, they exchanged but little speech, for he was troubled in his mind by sorrow and anger, while she had let down her veil in order to conceal the tears which were flowing. Presently, however, they each overcame their emotions to a certain

degree, and began to talk of the scenery and crops, or of anything but that which was uppermost in their minds. They had performed about twelve miles of their journey, and were just entering a village called Goodnesbridge, when they overtook a cavalcade of circus performers. Mr Garbold hailed this incident as a welcome diversion, and collecting the pace of his horses, drove slowly past various chariots, piebald steeds, and mounted mountebanks, to all of which he directed Helena's attention, endeavouring with some success to amuse her.

Unfortunately, however, as they were passing a gilded van full of musicians, these persons commenced to play a triumphal march, which was meant only to attract the villagers, but which also had the effect of alarming Mr Chobham's horses, who, at the first stroke of the drum and

cymbals, shied violently to the opposite side of the road. Then, in spite of Mr Garbold's efforts to pacify them and keep them in hand, they began to rear and plunge in the greatest agitation.

Nevertheless they were every moment getting further from the cause of their terror, for the procession moved very slowly, and all might have gone well had they not come to an immense car painted white, with mirror panels, and drawn by four camels. The two hindmost camels on seeing the horses approach them, began to slouch out of the way in their peculiar fashion; but the two foremost ones, either because ill treatment had not entirely subdued their natural love of vice, or because they were not under proper control, or from some uncouth notion of self-defence, turned towards the horses in such a manner as

barely to leave space for them to pass. The groom in attendance on Mr Garbold was all this time making signs to the band to cease playing, for the band was once more coming close to the horses, whose progress was being interrupted in the manner described; but the musicians paid no attention to him. Mr Garbold finding himself in danger of being thrown into a deep ditch on his right-hand side, now determined to push past the camels, and so escape at once the music which he heard approaching and the ditch. He therefore lightly applied his whip, and the horses sprang forward.

A most horrid complication followed. As the near horse grazed the side of the off camel, the chain-trace with which the camel was harnessed caught in the horse's bridle. The groom immediately jumped out, and with great intrepidity advanced

to disentangle the chain. But the camel with one effort broke away from all the fictitious harness connecting him with the car, and the horses bolted—as well as they could—with this ship of the desert attached to them.

After proceeding a few yards, the camel came to the ground, the horses fell with him in a heap, and the carriage was hurled on its side. Mr Garbold, who had only sprained his thumb, was quickly on his feet, and with the assistance of a negro-king, or some such personage, carried Helena, who was senseless, into an inn close at hand.

Having seen her attended by a doctor, and as well cared for as the circumstances permitted, Garbold found the groom, who at the time of the accident had just left the carriage, and was therefore quite uninjured.

and directed him to take one of the horses, or procure another from elsewhere, and convey the news of what had happened to Mr Chobham.

This groom must have been possessed by some imp of mischief specially sent to him; or, to be more exact, he was at this time in daily dread of disgrace, having been pilfering from a fellow-servant in order to discharge some turf-debts. Therefore, when he received Mr Garbold's order, he retired to the inn-stable where Mr Chobham's horses were, and having borrowed two halters, mounted one horse, and leading the other, stole away at a good trot.

On reaching some cross-roads (it afterwards appeared), he turned back, and riding to the fair, disposed of both horses for sixty guineas; after which he disappeared, and was no more seen by those who sought him.

Thus were the affairs of Mr and Mrs Frank Chobham left in a state of complete entanglement. In the course of the next chapter I shall have to describe the action of Mr Chobham with regard to the complications that had arisen. First, however, I must relate how I myself was brought into direct connection therewith.

CHAPTER VII.

As soon as I had discovered that White was serving under an assumed name in my own regiment, I made some inquiries respecting him. From the officers I learnt that he was considered a useless soldier, but a good-natured, ingenious servant. His troop sergeant-major told me that Blacker was regarded by his comrades as a "dry" —that is, a humorous—man, who could sing capital songs; and that the worst he—the sergeant-major—could allege against him was, that he was rather given to malingering. I was much puzzled, and applied to my father for advice.

My father, as soon as he had heard that his old favourite was a soldier in the regiment, wrote offering to buy him his discharge, and to take him into his own service again. But White declined the offer; and did so, it seemed to me, without any particular gratitude, but with a certain sulkiness which I could not comprehend. By degrees, however, I grew accustomed to having him about me; I learnt to call him by his assumed name; and I ceased to trouble myself about his mystery, whatever it was, as to which he, for his part, never seemed willing to make any further communication.

Soon after the White incident, I went to London, by Colonel Rush's desire, in order to attend a sale of horses—especially of some which belonged to an officer just ordered abroad. I was accompanied by Mr Joiner,

our veterinary surgeon, who came in the joint capacity of a friend and a professional adviser. He it was whose acquaintance I had made on going to Aldershot for the first time. Since then he had never again referred to his bay horse, "whom a young fellow could go through the school and get dismissed on;" and it was not until a year later that he told me the confidential horse had been sold to a foreign baron, who had not paid for him.

When Mr Joiner and I attended the sale in London, we found that a number of horses belonging to Ellis Garbold, Esq., were to be included in the auction. Therefore I was not unprepared to meet Garbold himself, which I presently did. After earnestly warning me not to buy any of his own horses—"for," said he, "they are none of them any use,"—he told me that he was

about to visit Mr Frank Chobham, who lived, he believed, somewhere in my part of the country.

On hearing this, I told him that Mrs Chobham was a very old friend of mine.

"What!" said Garbold; "Chobham isn't married, is he?"

"Indeed he is," answered I.

"What an extraordinary fellow, never to have told me!" remarked Mr Garbold.[1]

He then asked, "What is Mrs C. like?"

"Why," answered I, "she's very nice and jolly indeed; but what do you think of him?"

"I don't know, really," replied Mr Garbold. "He amuses me rather, and that's all I ever care about."

"You can't help liking Mrs Chobham,"

[1] I may remind the reader that this conversation took place before the events narrated in the preceding chapter.

I observed. "I daresay you'll pity her too."

"Oho!" said Mr Garbold; "then they don't quite hit it off, do they?"

I told him all that I thought proper to reveal on this delicate subject, and we soon afterwards separated.

When I returned to Aldershot with some horses which Mr Joiner had helped me to buy, Garbold and his projected visit had passed from my thoughts; and I was astonished to the last degree when, a fortnight afterwards, I received a telegram from him, begging me to join him immediately at Goodnesbridge, on a matter of the greatest importance. Anxious to be of service to him, and elated, moreover, at the prospect of a mysterious adventure, I at once asked for leave of absence; and having obtained it, hastened to obey Mr Garbold's summons.

After a considerable journey, some part of which I had to perform by road, I reached Goodnesbridge—a name which, I may as well observe, was pronounced Gunsbridge—and at once proceeded to a plain country inn, called the White Lion, from which place Mr Garbold had addressed his message.

I found him in a most disturbed frame of mind, cursing himself, Chobham, and many other things besides. I was at first surprised to see a man of his phlegmatic disposition in a state of such excitement. But when I had heard all that he had to tell me, —when I knew, above all, that the friend of my childhood, the unhappy Helena, was the victim of a strange and horrible accident, which would perhaps cost her her life—my wonder gave place to the profoundest and most lively sympathy.

I will not recapitulate, as related to me, the sad details which I have given elsewhere. I shall, instead, return to Chobham, and endeavour to throw some light on his proceedings at this time—my present information being derived from sources which I need not at this period disclose.

I feel much inclined, I must own, to give the worst possible colouring to Chobham's behaviour; but I shall do my best to be impartial. Most tales of infamy, as well as stories of heroism, have more than one version; but the real truth as to Mr Chobham's behaviour, I believe to be as follows:—

The carriage accident took place about twelve miles from his house; and though all news travels fast, sometimes incomprehensibly so, in retired places, yet this particular news was not brought to Mr

Chobham's home until the following day. The groom, who had been actually charged to communicate it, proved a very trustless messenger; but the knowledge that he had been sent, conspired, with a heavy fall of rain, to prevent both friendly and malicious gossips from transmitting the intelligence that night. Chobham having sat till a very late hour awaiting the return of his wife and Mr Garbold, at length decided that the wet weather had furnished them with a reason, or pretext, for remaining wherever they might be; and he retired to rest, resolving, I have little doubt, to be revenged upon Helena for her inconsiderate and reprehensible conduct.

It may be remembered that he had arranged to go to London the following day; and it is not unfair for me to state that the virtuous Miss Dean was there at

this time (as if on a visit to some foreign capital) for the purpose of consulting a doctor as to the state of her lungs. When the next day came, news of the accident was received and discussed by some irresponsible villagers; but it is supposed that it cannot have also reached the person who should have been principally concerned, for at an early hour he departed, unattended, to London. This proceeding may well be thought strange; and it was so considered at the time, in spite of Mr Chobham's explanation that when he left his home he intended to return the same day in order to see his wife.

In London he had an interview with Mrs and Miss Dean; but I believe they received him with some coldness. After the interview, he addressed a message to his wife, saying that he supposed she had returned in

safety, and that he should remain in London for a week, if Mr Garbold had left their house. Later in the day, however, he heard all from his butler, who told him not to be alarmed, but that Mrs Chobham and Mr Garbold had both been nearly killed, and were then at the White Lion, Goodnes-bridge; that his horses had been sold at the fair; and that Merroll the coachman had gone in search of William the groom, who had disappeared.

Over this budget of misfortunes Chobham ruminated for such a length of time that he missed the last ordinary train which could have taken him within reach of Goodnes-bridge. Under these circumstances, he might have certainly engaged a special train, or have found some other means of going that night where his duty called him; but he chose to act in a manner which

showed that if he felt any anxiety at all, that anxiety, strange to conceive, was on his own account.

Generally, when Chobham found himself in any perplexity, he went, in the first place, to his mother for advice; but it is worthy of note that on this occasion she was kept in perfect ignorance of what was happening. He sought out his solicitor, and had with him a long and exhaustive discourse,—the result of which was, that they both went down into the country the next day; the man of law to Goodnesbridge, with instructions to minutely observe the state of certain affairs at the White Lion—and Chobham to his own home, there to await the other's report.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr Garbold having told me the particulars of the accident, proceeded to explain his object in having sent for me. He knew me to be, he said, "a friend of the family, and a young fellow with a head on his shoulders," and had therefore decided that I was a fit person to assume charge of the injured lady while he went in search of her husband, for whom he had vainly sent a second time. I consented with readiness, yet with some feeling of diffidence, to the proposed arrangement; and Garbold was about to set forth, when Mr Chobham's emissary arrived at the

inn and at once desired an interview with him.

Mr Garbold and the emissary were soon engaged in a long consultation; and I was left to my reflections, which were of the most sorrowful and perplexing nature.

As I was thus sitting alone, an elderly woman with a forbidding countenance entered the room, and telling me "that the poor lady was faint," asked for some brandy. This person was the village midwife, who, in default of any abler person at hand, had been engaged to attend upon Helena. She pointed out a bottle of cognac which stood on the table, and I immediately pushed it into her hands, wondering how she could be so slow in the emergency she had mentioned. As soon as she had left me, a suspicion luckily occurred to me, which, when I had quietly followed the old woman, I soon

saw positively confirmed. Having entered a dark passage, she applied the bottle to her own mouth for some seconds, and then, setting it down on a table, proceeded on her way. Very disagreeably impressed by this conduct, I now became full of anxiety for Helena; and again following the old matron, presently saw her enter a room at the end of another passage, leaving the door open behind her. After a minute or two she came out again, and, without perceiving me, went away, carrying a plateful of rags or bandages.

I now stood outside the door, endeavouring to hear any sound from within, for I was seized with the idea that Helena might be dead. I heard a faint groan, which went to my heart; and without hesitation I stole into the room, to the side of a four-posted bed, the curtains of which had been re-

moved. There lay Helena Chobham, but at first I was positively unable to realise that it was she. Her hair was concealed by a linen bandage; her closed eyelids bore evident marks of long weeping; her brow was contracted in a frown, which I had never before seen it wear; her lips were parted, and shaped in an expression of extreme pain, mingled with scorn; her cheeks were of a cadaverous pallor; and altogether, she looked like a woman of thirty who had just been put to the torture.

I have said that I did not immediately recognise her—nor did I; but reason soon forced me to own what my eyes were slow to acknowledge. As I gazed on her, not knowing what to do, I recalled the easy and mirthful existence she had led as a girl; her good-natured and whimsical old father; Colling Hall, her handsome and comfortable

home; and the many pleasant days she and I had spent together; and, as nearly as I can say, I believe it to be the truth that I loved her from that moment, and for ever afterwards.

While my thoughts and my heart were thus engaged, I did not forget that it was Helena's faint cry which had summoned me to her side; and I anxiously waited to ascertain, if possible, how I could help her. She seemed to be in a deep sleep; but this was only the effect of extreme weakness. She presently gave a sigh, and feebly moved her hand in the direction of a cooling drink that had been placed near her. I put the glass to her lips, and she drank.

When she had finished, she opened her eyes and fixed them upon mine. But though she recognised me and was grateful for the slight service which I had performed,

she was too much prostrated with misery and with physical injury to wonder how I came to be there. Such, however, was not the case with a gentleman, evidently the village doctor, who at that moment advanced to the bedside.

In reply to his glances of wonder, resentment, and inquiry, I whispered that which first came into my boyish head—namely, "That I would give him anything in the world to cure her."

"Just step into the next room," said he, in a low tone. We were no sooner alone than he asked me a question of such a delicate nature that I was filled with embarrassment, and answered him in a manner which in turn filled him with astonishment.

Overcoming his emotion, he observed, "Your arrival will do her more good than any doctoring."

Perceiving the mistake he had made, I told him that I was not Mr Chobham, and then murmured that I was "no relation of Mrs Chobham's,"—that I was "just looking after her"—"just trying to assist my friend Garbold." All of which the surgeon kept interrupting with, "Just so,"—"Quite so,"—"To be sure, sir,"—"No doubt, yes;" though I believe he was saying in his heart, "Who can this impudent youngster be?"

But the reasonable error which he had made at first, stimulated me to devise a means for placing the care of poor Helena upon a more satisfactory and proper footing. Her husband chose to leave her to die, for all that he seemed to care; but I knew of one who was not only a skilful nurse, but a Christian also, whose presence would be of service in many ways. In

other words, I thought of my mother, and determined to bring her to the spot with the least delay possible. Leaving the surgeon, I returned to the sitting-room assigned to Garbold and me, and forthwith despatched a telegram to my mother, whom I told all that I considered needful.

I was soon joined by Mr Garbold, who was accompanied by Chobham's lawyer. The latter belonged to the higher order of his tribe, and I believe had undertaken the service on which he was then engaged, with better motives than might have been supposed; for, though he was sincerely trying to act for the ultimate benefit of his client, he was not at all following the instructions he had received from that individual, whom—it was afterwards said—he had with difficulty restrained from em-

ploying a professional spy for the expedition to Goodnesbridge.

When Mr Garbold and the solicitor came into the room, they were debating the proposal of the former, that he should go to Mr Chobham and demand an explanation from him. The solicitor opposed the plan—begging that he might first endeavour to bring his client to reason, which he declared he did not doubt his ability to do. But Garbold persisted, and, in the end, they both set forth together, in the same carriage, though the attorney first made the stipulation that they should separate when within a short distance of Chobham's house, and then advance upon him, each independently. After some hours, Mr Garbold returned to Goodnesbridge, with the amazing intelligence that Chobham had departed to Buxton! The lawyer had gone in pur-

suit of him; and Garbold would have at once done the same, had he not thought it his duty first to see me, in order to inform me of what had taken place, and so prevent the news being irregularly or injudiciously carried to the ears of Helena.

Mr Garbold brought back with him Helena's maid, who in her turn brought a quantity of things necessary for the comfort of her mistress. Soon afterwards a celebrated surgeon arrived from London. He had been summoned the day before by Garbold; but we were surprised to hear that his attendance had been also desired by the considerate Mr Chobham. The skill of the celebrated surgeon, and the assiduity of the experienced maid, soon had a good effect on poor Mrs Chobham's condition.

But the greatest improvement was observed shortly after my excellent mother's

arrival upon the scene. She, I believe would have hastened to perform any bidding of mine, even had it been on behalf of a stranger; but directly she had learnt from my message that she was required to assist Helena Chobham, she had flown to the spot on the wings of a double love and anxiety—for she had a greater fondness for Helena than for any other woman of her acquaintance. I knew this, but was yet astonished to see the extraordinary self-denial, patience, and care which my mother displayed. She immediately dismissed the village nurse, and astounded the local doctor by asking him "how he could have had so little chivalry as to have employed such a disgusting, tipsy old woman?" At the same time, she herself took her post at Helena's side, and scarcely quitted it for a moment.

The patient soon grew decidedly better, and was at last able to be removed in safety to my mother's house. To her own home, or rather to that of her husband, she declared she would never return. She had received from Chobham, while she was still at Goodnesbridge, a letter, which she had instantly destroyed. I cannot say what the contents of it were. I believe, however, that he wrote from Buxton, and expressed a hope that she had recovered from her injuries. An informal separation having thus come about, an improvement may be said to have taken place in the affairs of Helena Chobham.

CHAPTER IX.

In order to make a reasonable advance in this history, I will now leap over two years of my life. As to what had taken place during that interval, I need only say that I had become very popular in my regiment, and had been given the nickname of "Barbara." I believe the cause of my popularity was, that in my habits, tastes, and general opinions I resembled the majority of my companions, who had been, moreover, specially delighted with me for having broken my own collar-bone and my poor brown horse's back at one and the same time. I was now a lieutenant in the troop of

Captain Ponds, to which White, otherwise Blacker, also belonged. My first captain, Dubblemore, having been originally nearly ruined by the purchase of his troop, had retired on half-pay, to perish in great misery at Boulogne.

Our headquarters were now at a certain manufacturing town in the north, but I was with a squadron detached to another place. Captain Ponds was in command of the out-quarters; but as he kept his horses in a spot convenient for hunting, some distance away, he was, generally speaking, an absentee. At one time, however, during the prevalence of a great strike, he was compelled to remain at his post, in case of his services being required by the civil power. I was then pleased to see that, instead of giving way to regret at losing his hunting, Captain Ponds made the best

of the situation—proving himself to be a man of sense and an officer of resource. He daily practised the squadron in a kind of street-fighting; and to do this, he used to make us advance at a gallop with a narrow front, and deliver cuts at a number of riding-school posts which he had contrived to procure, and which he distributed about the ground in place of people. Furthermore, he every day visited his favourite charger in a loose-box, and there pelted him with carrots, in order to accustom him to the effect of missiles. This experiment was not quite satisfactory; for the horse soon learnt to eat the carrots, though he may have wondered why they were given to him with so much violence.

Some rioting had already taken place, and we were in constant readiness. Captain Ponds, on his own responsibility, hired

several grindstones, and made the men sharpen their swords. Also he fastened to the top of the riding-school posts, as substitutes for human heads, cocoa-nuts, which he caused us to cut open. But the most sensible precaution which he took, was to place in his sabretasche a pen, a small bottle of ink, and a sheet of paper. On this paper he had written, in a large round hand, the words, "I order you to charge,"—ready for the confirming signature of the magistrate, who would thus be baffled should he be willing first to order a charge, and then —some persons having been killed—deny having done so.

In the end, our services were not required in the place where we were quartered; but one morning, the troop to which I belonged was suddenly sent on a march of nearly thirty miles, to a small factory town where

some rioting, and burning of houses, had just taken place. As we marched into the place, a gigantic workman, with a few of his friends, came out and met us. He asked in a loud tone "whether we were English men?"

Captain Ponds, who rode at our head, took no notice of this, but moved on until he had reached the workhouse, in which place we were to be accommodated with quarters. It was a late hour before the horses were all watered, groomed, fed, and bedded down in some sheds assigned to them.

As soon as the men had been dismissed from their work, Captain Ponds, with myself and a cornet named Stoneyman, repaired to an inn, in order to dine there. We were joined at dinner by a local magistrate, and also by an individual whose

house had been burnt down the night before. The latter endeavoured to entertain us with an account of the considerate manner in which he had always treated the men in his employment, and the ingratitude with which they had repaid him for his goodness; but as we knew nothing of the truck-system which he was defending, we found his discourse very tiresome.

The conversation of the magistrate, however, proved more interesting. He first talked of the various riots which he had in his time been engaged in suppressing; and he became facetious upon the anomalous position of soldiers called out to aid the civil power—upon which Captain Ponds gave his two subalterns a wink, in order to remind them of the document which he had prepared in his sabretasche. The magistrate then turned to other topics, most of which,

however, were more or less connected with his official functions.

"Do you find," he presently asked, "that the majority of men who enlist in the army just now, do so from a love of the profession?"

"Not they!" answered our captain; "I only wish they did. Most of them come to us when they're out of work, or when they've got into a scrape."

"I thought so," said the magistrate. "But, now, what sort of scrapes?"

"Oh, well," answered the captain, "it's nearly impossible to say. Very often a woman's got something to do with it."

"Of course," said the magistrate, laughing. "But, now," he resumed with great gravity, "do you know of any other class of recruit that comes to you? Do you get any disaffected Irish, for instance?"

"Disaffected Irish!" repeated the captain.

"Yes," said the other; "Fenians, for instance. Do you suppose that at this moment you've any Fenians serving in your regiment?"

"I don't know anything about Fenians," answered Captain Ponds; "but I shouldn't think they'd exactly select our regiment to come to, because they'd know we shouldn't choose to take them."

"I hope you don't suppose I meant any disrespect to the hussars," said the magistrate. "But, to tell you the truth, I've received some very extraordinary intelligence, — some rather alarming intelligence, I may say, — within the last few days."

"Oh!" said Captain Ponds; "and what's that?"

"Well," the magistrate replied, "the Fenians are contemplating an armed rising almost directly."

"Oh!" said Ponds; "and what are they going to do when they do rise?"

"Why, as much mischief as they can;" answered the magistrate. "Burn down houses, as these rioters did to our friend here last night; steal all the property they can lay hands on; seize all the arms they can pounce upon; and very likely murder me, and several other people. That's what I expect they mean to do."

"Do you really feel much alarm about it yourself?" asked the captain, after a pause.

The magistrate made another pause, and then said, in reply: "If there's anything in it at all,—and I believe there is,—the worst feature in the business is the connection the military have with the movement."

"To what extent do you mean?" asked Ponds.

"To the extent of something like a dozen Fenians in every regiment in the kingdom," answered the magistrate; "and if my information's true——"

"What?" inquired the captain.

"I should wish it not to go any further at present," said the magistrate; "but the fact is, you're supposed to have a head-centre, as he's called, in your regiment."

"That's pleasant!" said Ponds, laughing.

"You'll kindly not mention it, will you?" continued the magistrate. "Perhaps I shouldn't have said anything to you; only Colonel Rush has been informed of it now, so that you will probably hear all about it from him, in any case."

We promised secrecy, and soon afterwards the captain, Stoneyman, and I with-

drew to our quarters in the workhouse. Stoneyman and I were in reality greatly excited by what the magistrate had told us; but observing that our captain treated the whole story with absolute ridicule and incredulity, we affected to do the same.

We remained for a week in the factory village, on the service which had called us there; Captain Ponds holding a daily parade and inspection, and also sending a daily shower of carrots at his horse. Affairs having then quieted down, we returned to the place whence we had been despatched. There, also, everything was peaceful, the strikes having all come to an end. The alarm about the Fenians also soon subsided, and no head-centre could be discovered in the regiment; so that most people gradually came to the conclusion

that they themselves, the Government, the magistrates, and the police, had all been made "*the victims of a stupid hoax.*"

Before concluding this chapter, there is one circumstance which I must not omit to record. White, otherwise Blacker, deserted our regiment. When his troop had been detached under the command of Captain Ponds, he had remained as a servant in the officers' mess at headquarters. There, having quarrelled with the messman on some trifling matter, he had borrowed as much money as he could obtain, and had then deserted. This proceeding on his part gave me much material for reflection. Why, if he found his military life disagreeable, had he not availed himself of my father's readiness to buy his discharge? Why had he not communicated with me? In a word,

what was all the mystery in which the man seemed to be wrapped? My father did not greatly assist me in my speculations. He told me "that I might depend upon it poor White's mind had been unhinged by the cruel treatment he had received from his sweetheart; that then he had suffered terrible hardships in the career which he had, in sheer desperation, adopted; and that, finally, his pride had made him choose his own means of putting an end to those hardships. I only hope," continued my father, "that the poor fellow may not have destroyed himself."

If, in touching upon the affairs of White, I have here and there thrown out any hints which have served to throw a light on his proceedings and motives, I would remind the reader that in attempting to account for such proceedings and motives

at that period of my life with which I am just now dealing, my own sagacity was unaided by the light which I have since been enabled to furnish for the benefit of others.

CHAPTER X.

I NOW intend to take another leap in my history—a leap considerably greater than the last. But first, as in the other case, I will briefly say something as to what had passed in the interval. I am happy to say that in that interval, which I must make one of seven years, my health had been satisfactory to every one but my enemies and my doctors; my character had somewhat changed, yet not for the worse; and I had learnt (at a cost of about £3000 in excess of my nominal allowance) many useful lessons. Also, upon the retirement of Captain Ponds, I had purchased the command of my old troop.

As to the members of my family, none of those sad changes which seven years so often witness had taken place among them. My father, having embarked with Mr Ralph Graham in a new silver company, had emerged from the transaction a rather poorer man. He had frequently been taken to task and lectured, both by his brother and by his thoughtful son, for the confidence which he had persisted in reposing in Graham. But though his infatuation had been shaken when the failure of the silver company aided our repeated attacks, his longing for the excitement of speculation had become insatiable; and I certainly believe, that during my life, I have been in general more alarmed by my father's peculiar kind of extravagance than he ever has been alarmed about mine.

With regard to Colonel Allen, my uncle,

he had found himself embarrassed, in an agreeable but very curious manner, by the possession of too much money; for, as I have said elsewhere, though a younger son, he had been independently bequeathed a large fortune. For some years he had been brooding over his difficulty, and had at last hit upon a plan for extricating himself therefrom. This was, to make an expedition to Arabia, there travel in parts never before visited by a European, and then return home, laden with treasures and curiosities. A considerable time elapsed, however, before his scheme was ripe for accomplishment; and at the period with which I shall be dealing when I resume my narrative, he was still in England, talking of gauze shirts, quack medicines, pistols, and portable boats.

Lastly, as to the amiable though still

unfortunate Helena, I shall in the next chapter try to repair some of the neglect with which I have been obliged to treat her. For the present I must return to my own personal history.

Our regiment was now commanded by Colonel Luke Melnotte, the heir-presumptive to an earldom, who followed his profession chiefly by way of pastime. As commanding officer, the only point to which he gave a rigid attention was the outward appearance of those under his command. For the proper working of the discipline, drill, and interior economy of the corps, he looked to the regimental staff and the troop sergeant-majors. This system, being employed as it was in time of profound peace, was not at all adverse to efficiency. It was only as if, in a limited monarchy, the ministerial responsibility had been

temporarily deputed to men of a rather lower grade than usual. Colonel Melnotte, however, was very absolute in the exercise of those prerogatives which he chose to retain; and though he allowed the troop officers almost as much leave as they could have desired, and was exceedingly lenient in dealing with prisoners, he required in return that we should always be ready to march past with exact precision, and that we should never be at a loss to devise a name for a man, or a number for a horse, at the general's inspection.

But the time was close at hand for Colonel Melnotte to have his attention turned to even graver matters. Our term of home service was nearly at an end, and we were sent to the town of C——, there to be stationed until the day of our embarka tion for India. In our last quarter the regi-

ment had earned a very high character, through the extreme good behaviour of the men; indeed the mayor and corporation (in their robes) had presented the officers with a piece of plate on that account. To maintain on the line of march the reputation thus earned and thus rewarded, Colonel Melnotte adopted an ingenious and highly characteristic plan.

At the morning muster, if any men were found to be drunk, the colonel had them quietly taken out of the place in a cab or other closed carriage. As soon as the regiment was clear of the houses the cab was dismissed, and the drunken men caused to march on foot until we neared the next halting-place, when either the exertion of walking was found to have made them sober enough to ride in, or another carriage was procured and they were conveyed into

the new place just as they had been conveyed out of the old, the expense thus entailed being deducted from their pay.

When we reached the town of C——, a well-filled cab quietly accompanied our rear-guard; and both the local newspapers congratulated Colonel Melnotte "upon the significant fact that not a single case of drunkenness had occurred during the march."

We found that C—— possessed but few attractions, and our life there would have been very dull but for the extreme hospitality of the people in the neighbourhood.

In some towns where we had been quartered we had found the local families stingy to the extent of baseness; they had never recognised our existence except at race-meetings and other such occasions, when certainly they had flocked into our tent,

swarmed round our drag, listened to our band, and eaten our provisions, in a very hearty manner indeed.

And yet, to speak of myself personally, I could find very little pleasure in society at this time. Besides being face to face with the fact that I was shortly going to India, I was tormented by thoughts of Helena Chobham, whose situation was at this time causing me great anxiety. Her image was constantly before me, but in imagination only. In the course of eight years I had seen her no oftener than eight times, and yet I was secretly devoted to her with my whole heart. On the rare occasions when I had met her, our interviews had been brief, and she had carefully shunned allowing me any opportunity for such an interchange of confidence as I was sighing for. She had been occupied for some years past in watch-

ing the sick and visiting the poor, chiefly at her own discretion, in the east part of London.

I had heard lately that her health was beginning to fail, and that her friends, including my mother, were renewing efforts which they had often made to cause her to desist from her self-denying, self-injurious occupation; and being on the eve of leaving the country, I had determined, whether rightly or wrongly, to see her myself, to remonstrate with her, and, above all, to come to an understanding with her. The first difficulty which lay in my path was to find her, the second difficulty was to see her alone; and I found means to overcome both.

Having heard that she was sometimes seen at a certain hospital in London, I asked a celebrated doctor with whom I had

long been on friendly terms, to give me his assistance. He at first told me that it was absolutely impossible for him to help me; but when he had sounded me for my precise motives as thoroughly as he had ever sounded the chest of one of his patients, he gave a short laugh, and observed that he knew Mrs Chobham intimately, and, moreover, heartily disapproved of the course she had taken in burying herself from the society of her friends. In short, he promised to assist me; and, either from the special persuasions which I believe he used, or—as I then preferred to suppose—from the compassion which his bare statement of my case excited, Helena consented to see me once before I left England.

CHAPTER XI.

BEFORE describing my farewell interview with Helena, I must endeavour to repair the long neglect with which I have treated her affairs. To do this I must first return to the period just following the carriage accident at Goodnesbridge. As soon as Mrs Frank Chobham had completely recovered from her bodily injuries received on that occasion, she announced her desire to retreat into useful obscurity. For some time, however, she was restrained—partly by the arguments and remonstrances of her former guardian, Mr Simmons, and those of my mother, but chiefly by some exertions

made by Mrs Chobham the elder and Mr Garbold.

As for Mr Simmons, he was rather shy of his former ward, who he knew had good cause for feeling resentment towards him —namely, on account of the share he had taken in bringing about her marriage. He confined himself chiefly, therefore, to writing letters of mild expostulation. My mother made more practical efforts. She began by detaining Helena at Hare Place, and causing several other ladies to come there as guests at the same time. By this step, however, she only made the object of her solicitude more unhappy. Lady Susan Longstaffe, really the least sincere of these visitors, was successful in her pretences of friendship for Helena, for she possessed a profound knowledge of the world, and moreover, was very good-humoured. But

the others were far less adroit, and they caused Helena much annoyance by continually kissing her, by warmly praising Mr Garbold to her, and by talking to her as though she had been an infirm elderly relative, who was rather deaf. So my mother's plan did not prosper. Mr Garbold, however, behaved with such firmness of purpose, such extraordinary patience, and so much tact, that he almost accomplished that which nearly every one else considered impossible.

Having very attentively considered the whole matter, he decided that the right course would be to bring Chobham back to his wife, and, at all events to outward appearances, reunite them. He saw many difficulties in this plan and many objections to it, but being convinced that it would be for the best, he devoted himself to its accomplishment. He first communicated

with Chobham's mother. She was in great tribulation at her son's misconduct; and having followed him (at Garbold's suggestion) to Italy, whither he had again escaped, she had the satisfaction of finding that Miss Bertha Dean would not permit him to see her. Mrs Dean also, though anxious that Mr Chobham should be happy, was still more anxious that her daughter should preserve her reputation, and she forbade Mr Chobham her house.

Thus, when Mr Garbold commenced his disinterested labours, circumstances were somewhat in his favour; for Mr Chobham was lonely, and especially lonely since he had no one to read travels to him, except his mother, who in that task had never been very assiduous, and who now began instead to ply him with persevering solicitations that he should seek a reconciliation with his wife.

At last, either to quiet his mother or in real deference to her wishes, or from passing remorse, he professed to consent to the proposal. The two persons who had been most active in bringing him to make this concession next realised the fact that to make a reconciliation between two persons both persons have to be parties to the transaction. Accordingly it was decided that Mr Garbold should open negotiations with Helena.

This decision was dictated by considerations of convenience, certainly not of prudence, and proved at first unfortunate. Helena showed Mr Garbold that, though she appreciated his motives, she also resented his taking upon himself such a very delicate office. Deeply repenting his indiscretion in not having employed some tearful, white-haired relative for the task, Mr

Garbold counselled the mother to bring Chobham to England.

This might certainly have been done, but Providence chose that Chobham should have a relapse at this time. Mr Garbold, when he heard of this, was in no way discouraged. Remembering his reception on the last occasion when he had interfered, he now called to his aid a rather distant relation of Chobham's, distinguished for his venerable appearance, and sent him to Helena to tell her that her husband had been attacked with paralysis which might prove fatal, and that he had been so seized when in the act of setting out to come to her and beg her forgiveness. Some delay, however, had taken place in securing the services of the picturesque old gentleman, and by the time that he made his petition to Helena, the circumstance upon which

he chiefly depended had disappeared; for Chobham, with a natural tenacity which at once delighted his friends and provoked his enemies, recovered. Helena had learned by experience to attach little importance to her husband's seizures and subsequent recoveries, which in their nature greatly resembled the more famous seizure and recovery of Old Mother Hubbard's dog. She accordingly declined to take any step in the matter. Mr Garbold did not assume that Chobham's illness was a pretence, but being unable to induce Helena to go to him, he patiently waited to see Chobham sufficiently recovered to come to her. He was at last, however, forced to admit that Chobham simply did not choose to stir.

Then Mr Garbold's patience and tact came to an end, and he endeavoured to indulge in revenge. He first attempted to

procure Chobham's expulsion from the club to which they both belonged. But in so doing he only betrayed his simplicity, for the committee told him that if they were to constitute themselves judges of the domestic honour of the members as he suggested, the subscriptions would soon show an alarming fall. Mr Garbold then resigned his own membership, thereby illustrating a very old proverb. He, however, gave himself the satisfaction of telling Chobham that he hoped some day to settle accounts with him.

Then, disgusted more than ever by the ways of the world, and especially disgusted by what he had seen of conventional marriages, he went to an Orphans' Home, and thence selected an amiable, clean, and pretty maiden of sixteen, who bore an excellent character. His intention was to

educate and marry her; and, in furtherance of that aim, he placed her in a comfortable house, where she was attended by a skilful tutor and an accomplished governess. He also provided her with some excellent saddle-horses under the care of a groom. The simple girl soon began to imbibe knowledge and to learn equitation in a manner which gratified her cynical protector to the highest degree; but one day she rode with her groom to a neighbouring church, and was there happily married to him. Thus Mr Garbold's curious plan of making use of a home for orphans as he might have made use of a home for lost dogs entirely failed. His pride felt the blow more severely than his heart; but he declared that had the world been divided as he would have it divided — namely, into the classes of serfs and masters—it would have been

impossible for him to have made such a mistake.

I have described the manner in which some attempts were made to prevent Helena from carrying out her fixed design of forgetting the selfish and frivolous world. She soon formed the acquaintance of certain unassuming philanthropists in London, who gladly gave her as much employment as she could have possibly desired, and more than she had probably expected. At the same time, abandoning the task of rebuilding Colling Hall as a home for herself, she completed on the old site a large and somewhat ugly brick building, which she filled with cripples and endowed as an Institution. Her former neighbours were sorry to see the last tangible remains of an ancient family thus — socially speaking — swept away; and though they professed

highly to applaud Helena's munificence, they were often known to talk in a violent and even minatory tone of the poor cripples who had so unexpectedly found a comfortable home.

To proceed, however, with my farewell interview. My friend the doctor had prevailed upon Helena to see me "on a matter of life and death"—I believe he had used that phrase; but when the appointed day and hour had at length come, and I was sitting in the doctor's drawing-room expecting to see her at any moment, I had become greatly puzzled as to how I was to excuse or account for the step which I had taken. I was endeavouring to compose a suitable speech when the door opened, and Helena Chobham stood before me.

I may say without exaggeration, that to me, if to no one else, she looked like an

angel. If her face at that moment had been blooming, if her dress had been brilliant, if she had shown in her manner the least design of courting admiration; or if, to own the truth, she had in any way revealed even a reasonable degree of happiness, though I should still have loved her, I should have also undervalued both her and her sufferings on the spot. But her face was pale, and most naturally mournful; her dress was of sombre, even coarse materials; her deportment was stiff, but majestic; and as I grasped her thin, cold little hand, I can only say I adored her with my whole heart. I forgot all the sentences which I had been devising for the occasion; I could think only of that one subject which it was my duty not to approach.

I murmured, however, in a mechanical manner, some words which expressed my

regret at leaving the country without first seeing her happy. For some time I could contrive to say nothing else, except a fragment or two more to the same effect.

She then asked me, with composure rather than with coldness, "whether this was 'the affair of life and death' that I had to communicate?"

I told her that it was, and then, seizing the opportunity, I said—all that I had ever dreamed of saying, far more than I had any right to say, with a sincerity and emotion which took the place of eloquence.

At first she listened with such an expression of face as she might have worn while hearing a patient relate a tale of misery in which she had no direct concern, but gradually a few gleams of sympathy stole into her countenance, and at length, in spite of

great efforts to control herself, she burst into tears.

Then, to confess the truth, I caught her in my arms. She immediately commanded me to release her; after which, regarding me with steadiness, but with a burning cheek, she said, "You forget who I am, Captain Allen."

I observed, sadly, "I wish I could forget who you are, or whose you are." But I begged her to forgive me for the transport into which my feelings had betrayed me.

"You'd better say no more about it," said Helena. "And pray," she added, "think no more about me. 'Everything that is, is for the best.'"

Seeing that I did not endorse these sentiments, she repeated, "Everything."

To which I dissented, saying, in the same manner, "Nothing."

She then went on: "I am very sorry indeed that I allowed you to see me. It was very foolish, most dreadfully weak; for it has only made you unhappy. I hope you'll occupy yourself with your profession, and —and think of nothing else." With this, she began to move towards the door, at the same time covering her face with her hands.

I implored her to remain, and, being in despair, exclaimed, "Oh, to think of such needless misery! That you should make yourself a slave and a martyr for the sake of such a man——"

Helena immediately turned back, and, uncovering her face, looked fixedly at me.

Avoiding her gaze, I added, "I wish he was dead, with all my soul!"

Upon which she at once came up to me

and said, with most unmistakable displeasure, "Retract that instantly, sir! Retract what you have said!"

I obeyed her; and before I could recover from the rebuke, she had left me.

CHAPTER XII.

When I returned to headquarters I was in a very singular frame of mind, and though not precisely in a state of desperation, I was just in the mood to engage in anything that was desperate.

At the C—— railway station I was met by my servant, who told me "that there was a row about the forage, and the colonel was asking for the captain of the week." Instead of expressing impatience or regret at this intelligence, which officially concerned me, I laughed aloud; and then, having driven up to the barracks at a leisurely pace, put on my uniform and walked

over to the stables. There I found Colonel Melnotte, the quartermaster, the orderly officer, and the quartermaster-sergeant, all in attendance on the general. The latter, as I approached him, held out a handful of something which looked like grass, and said,—"Here, Captain Allen; do you call this hay? Would you let your own horses eat this for hay?"

"No, sir; at least, I don't know," answered I.

But Colonel Melnotte, having looked at me attentively for a moment, told the general that I had just returned from leave, or otherwise he was sure I would have attended to any complaint about the forage. This satisfied the general; and, had it been otherwise, I believe that such a small military incident as his displeasure would have very likely led to a complete alteration in

many of the circumstances of my life. In other words, in the frame of mind in which I then was, I should probably have taken the step of selling out from the service.

But I soon had to busy myself with final arrangements for the approaching embarkation, and I found plenty of healthy occupation for my mind, in paying bills, buying guns, packing saddlery, and so forth.

Colonel Melnotte was also exceedingly busy at this time, for he was using all the influence and weight he could bring to bear on the Horse Guards, to induce those authorities to permit the regiment's being equipped with an antique head-dress which had been the regulation pattern for the corps when it had last served in India, some twenty years before. This antique head-dress for which he so earnestly longed, was not only a very cumbersome contrivance—

something in the shape of a quart-pot,—but there was no doubt at all that it did not protect the head from the sun. However, Colonel Melnotte's exertions were not altogether fruitless, for they served to remind the authorities that the army still persisted in cherishing tradition; and that, though it might be impracticable to allow the men of a regiment to wear quart-pots on their heads, it might still be dangerous to wantonly sweep away other distinctive badges, more ornamental and less objectionable.

As we were all busied in various ways, I one day received intelligence that Blacker of my troop—that is to say, White—had been arrested in Ireland as a deserter. An escort was sent to fetch him, and he was shortly afterwards brought a prisoner into barracks. A court-martial having been ordered to assemble for his trial, I then

thought it advisable to reveal all I knew about him. I accordingly told Colonel Melnotte how White had been a footman in my father's house, and had been beloved by all our family; how he had left our service, after suffering delicate health, in order to marry; and how, to the best of our knowledge, he had been jilted, and thus made desperate. I brought forward these facts with a view to benefiting the prisoner; and I so far succeeded, that a great part of the sentence soon afterwards pronounced upon White was remitted. He was still a prisoner, however, when the regiment sailed for Bombay.

That important event was at length on the actual eve of taking place. My baggage was packed, and some of it sent on to Portsmouth. I had made every arrangement in order to be as free from care as pos-

sible at the last moment. The bed on which I had last slept was sold to one of the crowd of Jews which had invaded the barracks; and so also was a threadbare frock-coat which I had finally cast away. At half-past six in the morning the regiment was marching through the streets of C——, the bands playing "The girl I left behind me." My own emotions had by this time become somewhat dull to the effects of that air, which I had heard played on proceeding from the north to the south camp at Aldershot, yet on this occasion I was certainly affected; for, though perhaps I was not marching into the jaws of death, I was nevertheless leaving the woman I loved; although, it is true, she was a lady of mature years, already provided with a husband.

The troops seemed to be in the highest

possible spirits, though they were soothing their nerves by incessantly smoking pig-tail. As they passed a small public-house called "The Green Man," one of them shouted, "Comrades, three cheers for old mother Poggs!" An enthusiastic response was given, and an old woman, having appeared at an open window, bowed her thanks for the compliment which had been paid to her, with all the grace of a duchess. As the soldiers happened to pass a chimney-sweep, one of them asked him when he had last washed his face. But the sweep, taking a pipe from his mouth, remarked "that they would soon see plenty more of the same colour;" which was very true.

Our march to the railway station was impeded by a number of young women, who, though they cannot have been blood-relations, seemed to be on terms of the

most affectionate intimacy with the soldiers. Some of them broke into the ranks, and actually caused their lovers to carry them along in their arms; a proceeding which affected some bystanders on the pavement even to tears. One of the poor girls said to a soldier with whom she was exchanging a passionate farewell: "Tom, promise me you won't have no nigger sweetheart." He seemed, for a moment, strongly affected, and replied "that he would see about it."

Having reached Portsmouth in safety, we immediately embarked on an immense Indian troop-ship which lay waiting for us. I was met on board by my mother, father, and uncle, who had all insisted on seeing me off, though I had already bidden them one farewell. I spent that evening with them in Portsmouth, and devoted my last

interview with my mother to earnestly begging her to befriend Helena Chobham, with regard to whom she had long ago discovered my secret.

The next day, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, we weighed anchor, and the town of Portsmouth soon afterwards appeared as a small speck.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE first incident of note in our voyage occurred as we were passing Cape St Vincent, when the alarm of fire was raised. This, however, was only done in order to exercise us at "fire-quarters;" a highly practical and very important kind of rehearsal, which took place about once a-week while we were on board. At this exercise of "fire-quarters" almost every person in the ship had some sort of duty to perform; and even the chaplain was obliged to shut himself up with the ladies in the saloon, there to give them ghostly advice. The soldiers worked the pumps

with great goodwill and good-humour, which were the more conspicuous from the fact that our men were constantly annoyed and insulted by the sailors, who heaped on their heads such epithets as "Lobsters," "Red-herrings," "Land-lubbers," &c., &c., and, moreover, devised for them many disagreeable and even degrading duties, which soldiers should never have been called upon to perform.

But soon after "fire-quarters," we had some excitement of an unpremeditated kind. In the middle of the night, White, who was still a prisoner, was seized with such genuine symptoms of fainting, that the surgeon on duty obtained permission for him to be brought up on to the upper deck, in order that the sea-breeze might revive him. As soon as he was exposed to the open air, however, he was attacked by most violent

nausea; and the sentry had to use great exertions to prevent White from falling overboard.

While this scene was taking place, the ship came into collision with a Russian brigantine, which carried no lights, and whose crew were keeping no sort of watch. Having merely carried away the bowsprit of the brigantine, we proceeded on our course as if nothing unusual had happened. But it occurred to the sergeant of the guard, just then, to inquire how matters fared with his prisoner Blacker, otherwise White; and he very soon ascertained that the unfortunate man had left the ship without permission. The sentry declared that Blacker had knocked him down at the moment of the collision, and had then leapt into the rigging of the brigantine. But this extraordinary tale was not be-

lieved; and, while Blacker was returned as "drowned," the sentry was quickly transformed into a prisoner.

The statement he had made was true, notwithstanding, as I shall hereafter explain; and therefore I need not trouble the reader with a description of the effect which White's supposed tragic end had upon my mind at the time when I first heard of it.

When we had been at sea rather longer than a week, and as we were one afternoon dining in the saloon, the trumpet sounded a halt; the engines ceased to move, and the terrible cry was raised that a child was overboard. The behaviour of some of the ladies at table, who had children on deck, was exceedingly curious on this occasion. Two or three of them certainly looked as frightened and miserable as any

one could have desired to approve; but a certain Mrs Tobbitt swooned, though in evident pretence, into the arms of a gentleman whom she had only known since she had met him on board; while another individual, Mrs Prue, seized the captain by the sleeve of his coat, and asked him: "Whether he thought that it was her child; and, if he did, whether she might jump into the sea to save it?"

In the end, a boat having been manned and lowered in one minute, nothing was found to have gone overboard except the life-buoy, which one of our sentries had dropped at the first alarm; and it was discovered that one of the soldiers' wives, having mislaid her baby somewhere, had occasioned all the confusion; and the captain ended the matter by stopping the woman's allowance of grog.

Mrs Tobbitt and Mrs Prue, to whom I have just referred, throughout the voyage furnished me with perpetual amazement by their proceedings. Mrs Tobbitt was the wife of an army surgeon, who held a civil appointment in the north-west provinces of India. She was an ill-made, strange-looking creature of about thirty-five. She had no less than six children, four of whom accompanied her on this voyage. It might have been supposed that, having to look after such a considerable portion of her family, she would have found little time for anything except her domestic duties; but it was otherwise, for she found plenty of leisure by the simple process of totally neglecting her children. She occupied her time in painting her homely face with a composition of chalk and other matter, in abusing the stewards and ship's company,

and reporting them for incivility; and lastly, in lurking in different out-of-the-way corners of the vessel in company with our youngest subaltern, who was occasionally relieved by an artilleryman. The "united ages" of the two male lovers thus "working in the same field," barely exceeded those of their fair enslaver. Meanwhile the unfortunate Johnny, Bertie, Leonard, and Annie Tobbitt were the plague of the whole quarter-deck; moreover, the poor little creatures were suffering from a cutaneous malady, which made them the terror of all the other mothers.

Mrs Prue acted with less audacity, and with more system, than did Mrs Tobbitt. Mr Prue was chaplain to one of the unhealthiest stations in the world; and he was at this time toiling at his duty in the plains of Bengal, expecting the

arrival of his wife. He used, we heard, to allow her to absent herself in search of health and pleasure to the fullest of his ability; but the state of his funds had now compelled him to recall her from England, whither she had been for the ostensible purpose of placing some of her children at school. Mrs Prue, during this return voyage, did not seek solace in the companionship of military subalterns, but she discovered an extraordinary affection for one of the naval officers, a certain navigating sub-lieutenant: so that, instead of sitting in dark nooks with gentlemen who might have been mistaken for her sons, she marched into the sub-lieutenant's cabin like an honest woman; and he openly feasted her with oranges, and showed her photographs of his relations. The result of this friendship was, that Mrs Prue was better attended

in the saloon than any other person, excepting the captain and the paymaster. She also borrowed money from her friend, in order to discharge her wine-bill.

But to proceed with the voyage. The false alarm of the child overboard occurred soon after we had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar. We did not touch at the Rock, but steamed on to Malta, where we were detained by a gale which continued for three days. We were much pleased with the place, and I was specially delighted by the baked monks whom I went to see, and by the opera which I visited each night. While it gave me the highest gratification to see so many visible signs of British supremacy, I was nevertheless mortified to observe the insolence of the miserable natives, especially of the police, who, in the helmets of London constables,

resembled monkeys rather than human beings. I was also sorry that it should be thought expedient to exact so much humility from the conquerors, who are compelled to turn out their guards, and pay other such compliments, to the native priests and their Popish processions.

We left the harbour of Valetta before the gale had quite subsided, and indeed we experienced rougher weather in the Mediterranean Sea than in any other water through which we passed; the Bay of Biscay being particularly calm. We reached Port Said safely, and here the vessel coaled, and most of us went on shore. But I found the place so dirty, disreputable, and in all respects depressing, that I soon returned to the ship. When we had finished coaling, and had taken a pilot on board, we proceeded to enter the Suez Canal, the narrowness

of which fairly amazed me. I recalled to mind the stock question of my old tyrant Marter, "Why can a canal never be made across the Isthmus of Sooez?" and the answer, "Because the sand would always fall in;" and I should have been glad to have brought him to the spot and given him a ducking.

As we were sitting down to dinner the first day after entering the Canal the vessel stopped, and was made fast to the shore for the night by large hawsers. After mess, one of our subalterns made a bet that he would pass along one of these hawsers to the shore, and, being as nimble as a cat, he succeeded. But he was followed by another, one of Mrs Tobbitt's youthful admirers; who, inspired by her glowing glances, was ready to face any danger. He only used his hands, whereas the other had used both

hands and legs, and the consequence was, that before he had gone the length of ten yards, he lost his hold, and fell into the water. Seeing that he was not out of his depth, and therefore in no danger of drowning, we all shouted with laughter, and told him there was a crocodile at his heels. Upon which he roared out, "Send a boat! send a boat! There is something moving; upon my soul there is!"

And so there was, though the object in question was the boat which he was so eager to behold. Mrs Tobbitt, during these proceedings, made a show of fainting; but we were too much engaged in laughter to give her any assistance.

Every evening while we were in the Canal, we halted, as on the first night; but the captain prohibited any more gymnastics.

A rather ludicrous incident of another kind occurred one day while we were in the Canal. The butcher and the cook were handling a live fowl and she contrived to escape. After flying a short distance she fell into the Canal. She floated for some time, and for all I know, might have eventually gained the shore, had not a small boat been suddenly launched from the bank. Some natives who were in this little craft captured the fowl, twisted her neck in an instant, and immediately returned to the shore. But while this was going on, the hen-coop had been left open, and a fine drake seized the opportunity to fly forth—which he did with the greatest intrepidity. During the laughter occasioned by his conduct, a duck, I hope a faithful mate of his, urged by his quacks to make a great exertion, also scrambled forth and

joined him in his flight. The pair flew happily away together over the desert; and I suppose either died of hunger or settled in some remote land, there to form a colony of their own species.

When we reached the Gulf of Suez, we found several Egyptian and Turkish men-of-war, decked out with flags, "in honour," we were told, "of the birthday of Mahomet." Our captain at once hoisted a quantity of bunting, and, as we had to wait some time in order to embark some natives, as stokers, our band was ordered to play. As soon as we had played the Turkish national hymn, the Turkish flag-ship mustered her band, and played 'God save the Queen.' Upon which our men gave the Turks three cheers. 'God save the Queen' was in this manner repeated three times.

We now entered the Red Sea; and here

the native stokers whom we had embarked began to be very useful; for they seemed to have the constitutions of salamanders. They were lodged in some sheep-pens, on the port side of the vessel, and a sentry was placed over them to protect them from being annoyed through the bars of their cage.

In the course of duty, one of the sentries thus posted was told to repeat his instructions; whereupon he said, "Not to allow these blacks to molest the Europeans," for which I believe he was corrected.

I was now in the hottest locality in which I had ever been; but I little knew what was to come. We wore white clothes, and had an awning fitted up to protect us from the heat of the sun. At night most of us slept on deck. We now, for the first time in our voyage, noticed some flying-

fish. I was astonished to find that they resembled birds in their flight, far more closely than I had been taught to expect. Mr Marter, I recollect, once told a group of open-mouthed little boys that the flying-fish could only leap a few feet out of the water, in order to escape the coryphene: whereas I could now see them flying with apparent steadiness for many yards.

Having navigated the Red Sea, and passed Mocha, and the Straits of Babel Mandeb, we touched at Aden. I went on shore with several others, and, in order to visit the bazaar and some celebrated tanks, hired a yellow-coloured beast which resembled nothing I had ever seen before. He was said to be a donkey; but I declare he seemed as much like a dog, or a stag, or a camel, except as to his ears. Whatever the beast was, he carried me safely through a

somewhat tiresome and uninteresting tour of inspection. Before leaving Aden, we made several purchases from the natives. Our riding-master, Orwell, in particular, laid in a great stock of feathers—with a view, I believe, to selling them by retail at some future time. He showed great skill in his bargaining, (although, as he afterwards found, he was no judge of ostrich-feathers), and brought to reason nearly all the natives with whom he dealt. One withered old black, however, who sat baling out his canoe with his hands, and at the same time exchanging a smart dialogue with Orwell, who was on the ship, refused to sell any of his goods except at an exorbitant rate; and at last paddled back to the shore, exclaiming as he went, "Nebber mind; plenty more dam fool come by-and-by!"

Soon after we had left Aden, a number of petty robberies, of which the military were the victims, took place on board. I suppose it was the jealousy between the two services which made the colonel assert that the thieves were sailors, and the captain declare that they were soldiers. Orwell missed a pair of boots and several of his feathers, and, being a poor man, made a great outcry; but he could obtain no redress. At length, however, Mrs Prue lost a shawl, which she chose to value at three hundred guineas; and, through her influence with the navigating sub-lieutenant, we soon had a general muster on the upper deck, and sentries placed at every hatchway, while the master-at-arms conducted a search below. While this was taking place, we noticed signs of great trepidation amongst the stewards who had been mustered on the

poop. These individuals had been extraordinarily active in clearing us out of our cabins every morning, on the ground that the first lieutenant was making his rounds. One of them was now heard to say that any one was welcome to search his chest. When that step had been taken, however, and the result made known to him, he declared that he would commit suicide; upon which he was put in irons and removed. Most of the missing property was found to have been concealed by this prisoner or by some of his comrades; but Mrs Prue's shawl was discovered, not long afterwards, in the cabin of Mrs Tobbitt, where I suppose it had been accidentally placed.

But I must not make the description of this voyage more tedious than the voyage itself was. We arrived at Bombay in due

course. Here the subaltern to whom Mrs Tobbitt had been so gracious, gave her a strong proof of his attachment. A raffle had been arranged, by which the subscribers each drew a ticket naming the exact time when the vessel would pass a certain lighthouse. The subaltern[1] won the raffle, amounting in value to £60, but he had no sooner done so than Mrs Tobbitt told him of something he had certainly not known before—viz., that he had engaged to change tickets with her. The foolish youth allowed this claim, and thus, for the many pleasant hours which he had passed with Mrs Tobbitt, he repaid her very handsomely.

We reached Bombay at an early hour in the afternoon; and after we had been

[1] Our young officers were no longer called cornets; a foolish foreign title having been bestowed upon them instead.

visited by the usual officials, most of the officers, including myself, went on shore to search for amusement and instruction, as the general disembarkment was not to take place until early the next day.

CHAPTER XIV.

I SHOULD have been glad to have commenced this chapter with an invocation to India, after the approved model of all invocations; but on thinking the matter over, I found that any such attempt on my part must have failed, owing to the doubts with which my mind is filled as to the standpoint from which it becomes me to regard India. India, from the poor man's point of view, and India from the rich man's point of view, are really two entirely different countries. The one may be very properly described as the poor man's

paradise, and the other may be described without very gross impropriety as the rich man's hell.

My first impression of the place, when I landed at Bombay, was rather favourable. It interested me to see for the first time mounted sowars, sepoys, Chinamen, Parsees, and baboos; temples, coloured lanterns, rows of brass pots, and lines of hookahs; brilliant Eastern silks, strange fruits, and heaps of various dyes. I listened with perfect good-humour to the novel sound of the *tom-tom;* and I was not at all disgusted by a peculiar spice-like smell which I afterwards learnt to abominate.

Most of my companions remained on shore, carousing exactly like a number of sailors who had been on a six months' cruise; but I was forced to leave them at

an early hour, as I was suffering from headache, in consequence of having worn a forage-cap all that day

When I reached the quay, a number of natives fought for the distinction of carrying me back to the ship; but, while this battle was waging, an old Hindoo, who had been neutral, conducted me to his boat, and pushing off, hoisted an immense lateen-sail, which soon brought us to the ship. Here the old Hindoo claimed four rupees and eight annas, which he declared I had promised him. As he became very noisy, one of the man-of-war's men at the gangway threw him into the sea; after which he was persuaded to abate his demand.

At two o'clock in the morning of the next day, the troops were reshipped, and taken in lighters, towed by a small steamer,

to a wharf, or *bunder*, where a train was in readiness. We were then taken by the train to a place called Deolalee, where we marched into a rest-camp, and remained five days. From this place Colonel Melnotte returned to Bombay, and purchased himself half-a-dozen Arab horses, which nearly all disappointed him in the end. Mr Joiner, too, the veterinary surgeon, was unfortunate in the same way. He bought eight horses at Bombay; but soon had to part with them, though not without a certain profit to himself.

At Deolalee we made several shooting expeditions, with the result that some very strange game was brought into camp. Orwell, the riding-master, who had taken out a carbine belonging to one of his rough-riders, and sixty rounds of ammunition, returned one day with the remains of a

huge bird which he told us was an eagle. It proved to be, however, a far less noble animal, with whose curious but useful habits Indian travellers soon become acquainted.

After our halt at Deolalee, the regiment proceeded up the country, travelling by night, and halting in rest-camps during the day. Our destination was a large Bengal station called Sugpore; and we reached that place in safety after a journey lasting about a week.

The first few hours which we passed in Sugpore were, to many of us, hours of the utmost discomfort and confusion: for, though the men marched straight into their barracks, many of the officers had not yet been able to secure bungalows, and were obliged to explore the cantonment in search of them. For my own

part, I at first thought myself very fortunate; for Colonel Melnotte, with apparent kindness, invited me to stay with him in the best bungalow of the whole cantonment. I soon found, however, that he had a rather interested motive in thus providing for me. The adjutant's wife had been suddenly taken ill, and her husband had obtained leave to attend her. Therefore the colonel required some one to perform various little extra duties which he was in the habit of imposing upon his adjutant, and he had selected me for this purpose.

For many hours I had to be constantly moving about, distributing orders or collecting information on behalf of Colonel Melnotte, who was already in consultation with the master-tailor upon weighty matters which would not bear interruption.

At first I hired a conveyance called a *gharry*[1] (for none of our horses were yet available); but presently, finding that the two ponies which drew it had already been overworked, I dismissed the vehicle, and giving the driver a present, desired him not to use his ponies any more that night. But he seems not to have understood the signs by which I sought to express my meaning; for I heard afterwards that on leaving me he drove directly to the barracks, and was there employed by the married families of the soldiers during the greater portion of the night. After dismissing the *gharry*, I procured an ill-conditioned little pony, and contrived to move about with more expedition. The *syce*—that is, a sort of groom—who had brought me this hack, at first tried

[1] An old-fashioned kind of coach, usually drawn by two ponies.

to follow me wherever I went, but I made signs to him to remain in a certain place until I returned. I afterwards observed that these *syces* take an eager pleasure in following their employers' horses, even when the latter are moving at full speed, and for great distances. Indeed, one *syce* was so devoted to this sport that he ran after his mistress until he fell down dead; and yet there were many people who blamed her instead of him for the catastrophe.

I had a very tiresome and fatiguing night's work before I had concluded all the business the colonel had deputed to me. The orderly officer was the only person more wretched than myself; he was nearly driven to despair. I retired to rest at three o'clock in the morning; but first I had my pony picketed outside the bun-

galow, and as the weather was cold, had him covered up in a good English horse-cloth—in which the poor *syce* was afterwards found sleeping.

CHAPTER XV.

Soon after arriving in Sugpore we were all astonished to hear that Blacker, of D troop, was once more a prisoner on his way to rejoin the regiment. He was presently brought in, and tried by a court-martial for having broken away from confinement. But owing to the ingenious defence which he made, and to the sympathy which the strangeness of his case excited, he received a very slight punishment, and he was soon at his duty, which was now that of an ordinary trooper. His story shortly told was this. When the troop-ship ran into the Russian brigantine, White, nearly be-

side himself with sickness, imagined that our ship was sinking, or that she might sink, or in any case that his life was in danger; and with a fatuous presence of mind he leapt into the shrouds of the brigantine, and there remained in an agony of fear until the crew discovered and rescued him. The crew of the brigantine had been suddenly shaken out of their hammocks in the dead of night, and when they ran on deck they could see nothing but a British soldier, pale as death, scrambling about in their rigging.

At first, — according to White, — they believed him to be the devil; but presently, when they had discovered the damage done to their ship, and had seen the lights of a great vessel fast moving away, they decided that he was a spy; and although he told them that he was a major in the army,

they treated him with gross indignity, and some cruelty, until they put in to Gibraltar, where they handed him over to our military authorities. As to the fact that the sentry placed over White on board the troop-ship, had been found lying on his back with a bleeding nose, this White explained by saying that a spar had struck him ; and the man himself owned that something uncommonly hard had hit him.

The general who commanded the division in which Sugpore was, was a brave and distinguished officer of the singular name of Walnut. He was a very eccentric, unpopular man, although in reality both capable and noble-hearted. His many services had procured him, late in life, a knighthood, and the command of a division ; but had he been a man of less singular character—though at the same time a man of

less capacity and worth—he would have been by this time commander-in-chief of a presidency, at the least.

The first taste we enjoyed of Sir George Walnut's peculiarities was about a fortnight after our arrival, when he treated us to a night-surprise. I was aroused by my bearer, who, coming to my bedside, exclaimed, "*Sahib, sahib! Oótow, sahib! Bahut bobbery; tope, boom! boom! bolta.*"[1]

While he was still shouting "*boom! boom!*" which was all that I could the least understand of his speech, a trumpeter trotted up to the front of my bungalow, and immediately sounded the "Alarm," "Boots and Saddles,"

[1] "Sahib, Sahib! get up, sahib! Great commotion; the guns say Boom! boom!" *Note.*—For one or two reasons which can easily be surmised, I intend to spell any Hindustani words that may occur, not as they should be spelt, or as they should be pronounced, but as they are colloquially pronounced by the majority of English officers.

and "Fall in," one after the other. We were mounted and on parade within a very short space of time, and the first duty I myself had to perform, was to escort the general with a squadron. He scampered along on a short, ill-looking, dun-coloured cob, closely followed by his aide-de-camp and his brigade-major, who, out of policy, each of them feigned an extraordinary sympathy with all the general's vagaries. The eyes of Sir George Walnut, as he galloped along, were gleaming like those of a madman (which was what many people called him), and his enthusiasm in the imaginary battle was only the more kindled when a realistic incident, for which no one was prepared, suddenly took place. We had just left the cantonments, and gained the highroad, when the hedge on either side was most unexpectedly lined by two com-

panies of Highlanders, who presented their loaded rifles at us. They were highly commended by the general, but ordered to procure some less dangerous ammunition as quickly as possible.

We had several more night-surprises under Sir George Walnut's direction. His favourite mode of proceeding was to rise in the dead of night, saddle his horse with his own hands—(the *syces*, who knew his humour, all pretending to be asleep)—and then steal off to a battery of artillery, and cause a blank cannonade to be opened upon the sleeping garrison.

We grew very impatient with the general and his eccentricities; but ere long we had to contend with another and more serious inconvenience — namely, the hot weather. I will briefly describe our mode of living in the month of June. Having risen at

about five o'clock, sometimes much earlier, after broken and unrefreshing slumbers, we proceeded to perform certain duties. We marched past the colonel, or had a field-day with the major, or went to church on foot; or else we went to the divisional parade-ground, to see the irons fastened on to a young soldier, who, in deference to the scruples of the British populace, was being sent into penal servitude for a few years. The discharge of these early duties caused us to break into a prickling sweat, which forced its way through our white clothes, and made us look as though we had just been rescued from drowning. We then went to the mess, and made a meal which resembled a funeral repast; for we were generally sad, and without appetite. After that—except upon a holiday—we performed more duties, which, for most of

us, lasted till ten o'clock, and then we galloped back to our bungalows, which the heat of the sun had meantime transformed into veritable bakehouses. After bathing and dressing, and generally, also, sleeping, we again mounted our horses or ponies, returned to the mess, and there screamed for tiffin, and for the *punkah*, after the manner of so many debilitated old Spaniards.

At last the sun went down, which was the signal for every one to emerge from the various ovens where they had lain concealed, and go in search of exercise and pleasure. Even the ponies were brought out of their stables and thoughtfully refreshed with a few games of polo. The cricket-ground and the racket-court were both quickly occupied; and the club became filled with visitors, who smoked and drank, and tried to talk sense, to the best of their ability.

Most of the rank and beauty of Sugpore at this time congregated on "The Mall," where one of the military bands usually discoursed. Here could be seen, sitting in his barouche, the commissioner, who was accompanied by his wife, his daughter, and his aide-de-camp. The commissioner wore an English tall hat; and looked like a man who detested India, and would have much preferred to have been living quietly in England, provided that in the latter place some arrangement could have been made for continuing his Indian official pay. The commissioner's wife had the air of a matron who loved her husband (and the looks of other matrons conveyed a totally opposite impression as regarded themselves). The commissioner's daughter was engaged in flirting with the aide-de-camp—whom she heartily despised; and the aide-de-camp

was employed in giggling, squeaking, perpetually expressing innocent surprise, and, in short, playing the official courtier.

Here also the garrison instructor was to be seen, seated in a mail-phaeton with his wife, whom he was supposed to entertain with the description of his new instrument for measuring angles. The doctor of the native cavalry, too, would pass down the Mall, driving his four horses, with a prodigious rattle of the bars; his team always trying to turn off in the direction of our barracks, where, to be sure, they had once been quartered in the capacity of troop-horses. We also used to see the cantonment-magistrate arrive in his buggy; call his *syce* a pig, and throw the reins at him; then fold his arms, close his eyes, and listen to the music, with a cheroot in his mouth. The handsomest equipage to

be seen on the Mall was that of the lawyer. This wretch was suspected of having dark blood in his veins; and though, to prove the suspicion false, he cudgelled his servants from morning until night, he was sent to Coventry. He and his wife, therefore, were forced to be contented with their own society, but lived in luxury, and were perhaps all the happier for their enforced retirement.

I found the hot weather worse than I had ever anticipated that it would be; and yet something more infernal was to follow. I had lately observed that the atmosphere grew more oppressive; especially in the interior of my house, when, owing to the prevalence of a dust-storm, I was compelled to close every crevice and light my lamps. At length a few great globules of water began to fall, and then came a heavy and

continuous fall of rain. The dusty tracts around us were soon covered with green grass. Strange beasts emerged from the ground; bewildered jackals trotting down the Mall in broad daylight. A serpent, driven from his own retreat by simple necessity, came into my bath-room, and was there despatched. The frogs, which were of a bright colour and monstrous size, kept up an incessant chorus; and furthermore, my bungalow being close to the churchyard, I heard the muffled drums and the "Dead March in Saul" almost every day: for cholera had broken out in the garrison. That horrible disease at length attacked some of our women and children; then two or three men in my own troop; upon which I was ordered to march off into camp.

CHAPTER XVI.

FOUR hours after the receipt of these orders, I rode out of Sugpore with my troop, and presently encamped on the side of the road under what is called a *tope* of trees. I was allowed no subaltern, for the regiment had but three available for duty at this time; the rest being either on leave, or on the sick-list, or learning musketry, or being taught in the garrison class that the *rôle* of cavalry in modern warfare was contemptible.[1]

I could see that nothing was to be gained

[1] *Vide* 'Clery's Tactics,' a text-book used in the garrison classes.

by repining, so I tried to make the best of my situation; yet I was heavily depressed, and probably only one person in the D troop felt more so. This person was the unhappy White, our former footman. He had never been very healthy since his first recapture; and since he had been taken the second time, he had made sad inroads into his constitution by daily sitting in a half-cask of cold water reading the newspaper. He was followed into camp by a tawny-coloured little mongrel, for which he seemed to have an honest affection. The other men in the troop showed their depression by entirely ceasing to swear: a very remarkable sign when exhibited by those whose ordinary language is proverbially horrible. The horses, many of them aliens like ourselves, evidently shared in the general dejection. I had ordered dried

grass (which we used indifferently in the place of hay or of straw) to be placed on their backs, and their blankets to be strapped over it; and when they were thus swollen and swaddled, they presented a more woe-begone appearance than ever. As soon as the tents had been pitched and the horses picketed, the men brought in a quantity of pretty dry fern and other materials, and made a large fire. This seemed to raise their spirits, for I presently heard them utter from behind their pipes a few of their familiar oaths.

We had been encamped just two hours when the sergeant-major of the troop ran into my tent and said, "Bristowe, sir, the trumpeter, is taken with the cholera."

"What does the apothecary say about it?" asked I; for all the surgeons were busy at Sugpore, and at present we had

only a half-caste warrant officer to take charge of our sick.

"He says," answered the sergeant-major, "that he won't live five minutes."

Upon this I rose, most terribly disturbed in my mind; but at that moment the apothecary came in and reported that the trumpeter was not suffering from cholera, but only from pains in the back, which probably resulted from something far less serious.

"Well then, sir," said the sergeant-major, when he had heard this, "I've told you an untruth. Mr Bell," he continued, turning to the apothecary, "didn't you tell me Trumpeter Bristowe had the cholera?"

"No, sergeant-major," answered the half-caste; "I only told you he might have it."

Upon this the sergeant-major shook his head with an air of incredulity, and walked off.

The illness of the trumpeter was of special consequence to me and to the troop, inasmuch as no one else could sound the trumpet. But to supply the want thus entailed, one of the men sounded the various trumpet-calls on a hair-comb wrapped in paper. When I was sitting down on an old wine-case to eat my dinner, the "mess trumpet" was imitated just outside my tent, and to my great satisfaction. The efficiency of the device was formally recognised on all sides, even by the horses, who gave their accustomed whinnying and neighing whenever the hair-comb played "the Feed."

I had been in the cholera camp just three days and four nights, when the troop-sergeant-major, in giving me his morning report, observed with a smile, "Blacker, sir, has gone sick."

"He hasn't got cholera, I hope?" said I.

"No, no, sir," answered the sergeant-major, laughing; "he's no more ill than I am. To be sure we can't see into his mind to tell whether he's speaking the truth or not; but it's my own opinion, he's merely scheming."

The apothecary came up at this moment, and said, "Private Blacker would like to speak to you, sir, if you'll let him. I don't think he's many minutes to live."

"Is it cholera?" I asked, in great surprise.

"There's no doubt about that," answered the half-caste.

I immediately said that I would see the dying man. First, however, by the apothecary's instruction, I took certain precautions against infection.

At the moment when I entered the tent where White lay, he was in a convulsion of

pain, and his face was turned away from me. I sat down by the *dhooley*,[1] which served him for a bed, and gently took away the poor man's tawny-coloured dog — a faithful attendant, whose caresses were only increasing his master's misery. When the convulsion had ceased, White turned round his face, and having recognised me, burst into tears. I at first tried to cheer him in the manner which naturally came to me; but directly I spoke of recovery, he interrupted me, and said, "No, no, master Tommy; it's all up with me, I know. And yet I've been in so many straits before, and got safe through them, that I can hardly believe I'm to die. I'd best tell you all I've got to say, before it's too late."

I begged him to tell me anything that

[1] A covered bier, used for carrying the sick and wounded.

weighed on his mind, but on no account to agitate himself more than he could avoid.

"Well, then, I've been a downright rogue and a thief;" said he. "It was me robbed the old squire of his plate."

"We all forgive you for it," said I.

"I took something besides the plate," White resumed. "Old papers; your mother's marriage certificate. It's sewn into the lining of my blue stable-jacket."

"You've made amends for that by telling me," said I; "and I suppose you wrote me that letter at Wolvenden?"

"Yes, I did," replied White. "It was all through a bit of spite I had against you for looking in my bedroom, along with Mr Sutcliffe, one day. You took him there, Master Tommy, didn't you?"

"I can't remember," answered I. "But you'll forgive me if I did, won't you?"

White grasped my hand, and then continued: "You haven't heard the worst yet, and I don't like to tell it either."

He was here greatly overcome, and I waited until he was able to proceed, which he did as follows: "I've been guilty of—of something worse than what I've told you. Poor Sergeant Brett—the police van at Manchester,—I was in that job."

"The Fenian business in 1866!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," said White. "When I joined the regiment at Leeds, I was a head-centre, and in with Kelly and his lot."

"When the police van was attacked you were in desertion, weren't you?" I observed.

"Yes," answered White; "I had deserted, and because they'd got wind of there being Fenians in the regiment. That blew over

as soon as I'd gone. But oh, sir! dear Master Tommy! ——"

Here he broke into most distressing exclamations of penitence and despair. Deeply affected myself, I performed the difficult task of comforting and consoling him to the best of my weak ability. But his body was soon once more in mortal agony, and his mind wandered. The apothecary, who had hitherto been waiting outside the tent, now came in, and endeavoured, as far as his skill enabled him, to give the dying man relief. But the condition of poor White was far past remedy, and presently, quite exhausted with pain, he expired.

I immediately despatched a native orderly —one of a small body of *sowars* temporarily attached to the troop for such duties,—with a report of what had just taken place to headquarters. And in the meantime, I gave

orders for a grave to be prepared for the deceased, under a large tree in the adjacent jungle. At a little before sunset the *sowar* returned, bringing me instructions to shift my camp at once, and information that a surgeon would join the troop at the next encampment. But he also brought me letters and a telegram from England. The letters were, in fact, principally bills, in a somewhat alarming quantity; the telegram was from Helena Chobham, telling me that my mother was no more.

I will not describe the state of my feelings when this last most heavy and most unexpected blow was added to my existing stock of misery. I sat on my wine-case for nearly an hour, with my face buried in my arms.

Then a voice addressed with the eternal "Sahib!" and looking up, I beheld a most hideous black, whom my bearer was scold-

ing, and causing to kick off his shoes. I asked him fiercely what he wanted. Upon which he replied, with a salaam, "I grave-diggory, sahib. Plenty man die; I grave-diggory all man."

My bearer then explained that this Caliban had come to report himself as a newly appointed gravedigger-extraordinary to the troop. He had already been plying his horrid trade; and when he had been expelled from my tent, I followed him, in order to conduct the interment of White. I performed the ceremony with an emotion which must have astonished all beholders; and yet, though I had deeper reasons than those which were apparent, for the grief I could not contain, I believe that I bestowed a separate sigh and one separate tear on the memory which I was openly honouring.

As we rode out of this encampment soon

afterwards, in a heavy downpour of rain, we saw the tawny-coloured little dog return to the grave we were leaving, and seat himself there as chief mourner. One of the men went back for him, and took him under his care into the next camp; but in the night the little animal again returned to the grave, and, it was said, was carried off by a wolf. Thus ends the gloomiest chapter in this history, and one of the gloomiest chapters in my whole life.

CHAPTER XVII.

AFTER remaining under canvas for about three weeks with no further mortality than that which I have recorded, our troop was declared free from cholera, and we were recalled to Sugpore.

With regard to the extraordinary confessions I had heard from White, having found the marriage certificate in the place of concealment he had indicated, I had taken the liberty of securing it. It was right that the document should be in the possession of that family whom it concerned; yet I cannot say that when it passed into my hands I felt any such keen satisfaction and devout

thankfulness as I believe poor White had intended me to feel. The fact is, this certificate was nothing more than the copy of another certificate duly registered in one of the parishes of Edinburgh. And of this I had long been aware, though I did not find it advisable to communicate the circumstance to the reader any sooner than I have done. Secondly, as to the matter of the plate robbery. It was in a measure satisfactory to know who the culprit had been; but it would have been much more satisfactory to have learnt how the culprit had disposed of the property which he had stolen, and this information poor White had not succeeded in giving me. On the whole, therefore, my sorrow for his untimely end was unadulterated—that is, it was unmingled with any of that stealthy glee which mourners occasionally feel, when he

for whom they mourn has incidentally bequeathed them something of more tangible value than his memory.

The foregoing remarks relate only to that part of White's revelations which was of a private character. As to what he had told me respecting his connection with the Fenian brotherhood, I solemnly laid it all before Colonel Melnotte, directly I returned to headquarters; and, in so doing, believed that I was performing a public duty of some importance. The colonel, however, chose to treat White's confession of Fenianism with ridicule and incredulity. "He was off his head, you may be sure," said the colonel.

I told him that was certainly not the case; upon which Colonel Melnotte said, "Then I'm afraid he was lying."

This opinion he obstinately maintained;

and, notwithstanding all the circumstances which I adduced to make him take a more serious view of the matter, finally adopted a verdict much favoured by the intelligent public in such cases—namely, "*that the whole affair was a stupid hoax.*" He did consent, however, with the adjutant's advice, "to write a letter about it."

That was all the satisfaction that I obtained. The officers were facetious, the non-commissioned officers incredulous, and the men, so it was alleged, indignant, at the imputation of there being such a thing as disloyalty in the regiment; and it became a favourite joke at mess, to inquire "whether old Barbara had run in any more Fenians?"

At this time, after carefully considering the advisability of applying for leave to go home, I had decided to remain for the

present where I was. Having first felt some anxiety on account of my father, who seldom wrote to me, I had been relieved from that anxiety on the receipt of a letter from him, in which he stated, that feeling shaken by his recent affliction, he had taken the step of summoning home his brother, who had gone to Arabia. Another reason I had for staying in India was, that there I was in the enjoyment of very handsome pay, which enabled me not to feel the effect of a certain neglect my father had of late shown in the matter of remittances.

Nevertheless my late bereavement, with the horrors of the cholera camp, made me desirous of taking a rest from duty on my own account. So the rains having come to an end, I procured a month's leave of absence, and taking my gun and rifle, departed to a distant spot in search of sport

and relaxation. The place to which I went was in a part of the country but seldom visited by Europeans; and, partly on that account, it abounded with game. There I fell in with a tea-planter, who not only saved me a great deal of trouble by engaging a good *shekaree*, and a number of coolies, for my service, but also persuaded me to use his house, or hermitage, as my home.

He told me his simple history without any reserve. He was a man of good family and means, who, having failed in three attempts to pass the army examination, was now seeking to gratify his natural love of excitement and adventure, as best he could, in a wild country, and surrounded by wild men and wild beasts. He sometimes paid a visit to a hill-station about forty miles distant; but he did so only when his provisions or his ammunition began to fall

short. The life he led was a life almost of solitude. Both his business and his enjoyment were primitive, and he had the inestimable moral advantage of scarcely ever seeing a newspaper, from one year's end to another. With this individual I passed away my holiday, with great advantage both to body and to mind. We rose each morning before sunrise, and retired to rest each evening not long after sunset; our day having been spent in healthy exertion and animating adventure. I was sorry when I was obliged to leave my companion, in order to return to the regiment; for not only was his society agreeable, but he interested me. I begged him to come and visit me at Sugpore whenever he could; but he declined, saying that it would break his heart to be amongst soldiers, except as one of themselves.

I now proceed to a momentous period in my history. When I returned to Sugpore, I found a budget of letters awaiting my perusal. Some of these letters were from tradesmen, whose general tone in demanding their dues somewhat alarmed me. But the letter which most disturbed me was from my father. It was very long, and very badly written; crossed, and disfigured with blots. As to any sense that it contained, the only plain information that I extracted from it was this, that my father was in desperate trouble. What sort of trouble, he did not assist me in perceiving; but I inclined to think that he had embarked with Mr Ralph Graham in some speculation which had ruined them both. But why did not my uncle write? I had supposed that he had by this time returned from his travels. And what was

Helena Chobham doing, that she could not convey me any hint of what was taking place?

But I reproached myself for asking that question, when, just as I had finished reading my father's unintelligible letter, my bearer came in with a telegram from no other person than Helena herself, which contained the words: "Father quite well; please come home; urgently required."

I immediately hastened to Colonel Melnotte, whom I had not yet seen, and was about to tell him my business, when he observed of his own accord, "If you want to go home, you can start off by the next train. I'll make it all right. Sir George Walnut's not here; he's gone home himself." Without staying to inquire how the colonel had become a wizard, I at once took the hint he had given me; and having left

a few necessary directions behind me, I proceeded forthwith to Bombay, and there secured a passage in a vessel just sailing for England.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I WILL not afflict the reader with a descriptive analysis of my frame of mind at the time when I was rushing towards troubles and dangers of an unknown nature and extent. I shall endeavour instead, to give a few rather interesting fragments from the conversation of a certain Mr Ratcliff, whom I met on board ship, and who afterwards had an important connection with my affairs. He was now returning to England with a large pension, and some honours, after having spent a very useful portion of his career in the service of the State. We contracted an acquaintance by some chance incident

on board; but we soon began to understand one another very well. In fact, knowing no one else, he gradually found me necessary for his happiness; for, like nearly every other man of importance, he always liked to have within reach some one to whom he could confide a few of his secret thoughts.

At first we talked on commonplace topics; then he took to asking me questions, with the evident design of extorting some opposition. For, unlike the archbishop in 'Gil Blas,' nothing pleased him better than to have fallacies discovered in his own arguments and opinions. One night, while the other passengers were engaged in music, a science for which he had a good-humoured but hearty contempt, Mr Ratcliff favoured me with some of his opinions on matters of Indian

policy, in which he discovered many anomalies.

I had observed that it seemed a pity a useful Viceroy should have to be changed on account of a change in the Home Ministry.

Mr Ratcliff.—That's merely one of the eternal evils of party government. But cannot you perceive that our position in India is altogether anomalous? It is like that of a great nobleman of the present day, who, by some ancient, unrepealed law, should find himself the real feudal lord of one county, in the midst of an otherwise self-governing population. The situation which we have gained in India may be satisfactory to those who hold imperial notions; but it is a perpetually mortifying problem to those whose ideas of policy are cosmopolitan. It is like the grand difficulty the atheist finds; he can dispose of any

number of theories, but he is for ever confronted by facts.

ALLEN.—Certainly. But go on about India.

MR R.—Well, then, if a man was in the habit of declaring that every sickly infant ought to be destroyed, exposed on Mount Taygetus,—I forget if there ever was such a place,—and if he then had a most sickly infant born to him, and felt for that infant not only a natural, but a wholly extraordinary degree of tenderness, how would he act? In heroic history, of course he would sacrifice it; but in real life he would——

ALLEN.—He would make the best of it.

MR R.—Probably. After careful inquiry, he would put it out to nurse; and having thus relieved himself of a certain amount of visible responsibility, he would secretly see to its welfare, supplying it with funds.

ALLEN.—India——?

MR R.—Very good. India was formerly put out to nurse, you may say; but she has been taken from the charge of her nurse—I mean the East India Company—because that nurse was considered incompetent; and now the Spartan father—that is, the Home Government—finds it very difficult to bring her up. Her technical requirements are not well understood by the parent; and besides, the infant has grown considerably; and the sickliness which it was intended should be concealed, has become very obvious, and embarrassing. Do you see what I mean? or would you like me to shut up?

ALLEN.—I should like you to proceed.

MR R.—We obtained India by commercial enterprise, by diplomacy, and by the sword. We hold it now by the sword;

that is, we occupy it with armed men, though we govern it as if we were merely foreign visitors, remaining there on sufferance. This is owing to one unfortunate national characteristic which is constantly coming in our path, that of being always more generous than wise; pushing headlong into conquest, and then exhibiting remorse for that conquest. In the early days of our rule, we used to regard India as nothing else but a mine from which to extract wealth; instead of which we now seem to think it a sort of eleemosynary institution, with the support of which our forefathers have encumbered us. In former times a governor-general's best road to distinction was to send home as much money as he could lay hands upon. That was conquest. Then came remorse, when each Viceroy seemed to vie with his predecessor in tak-

ing off taxes; until at length it is found that there is scarcely any further favour left for us to confer upon India, except that of apologising for the long stay which we had made, and taking our departure; and the time will shortly come when a Viceroy will be chosen, not on account of his talents, but on account of his docility. The possession of original talents will be deemed highly dangerous; and well-approved, undoubted *mediocrity*, will be the qualification upon which most dependence will be placed. Do you suppose we could ever have held India against the French if we had tried to govern from the first in that fashion?

Formerly, we directed practical men on the spot to rule; and as they clearly and constantly saw the dangerous nature of their position, they were compelled to be guided

by common-sense and expediency, instead of by sentiment and emotion. It was after these practical men upon the spot had secured for us a tolerably firm footing in the country, that the victims of emotion, the ignorant victims of sentiment and emotion at home, began to display the famous national failing, the weak generosity which the Sepoy mutiny providentially disclosed in all its absurdity.

ALLEN.—Then the mutiny was of some advantage after all; was it?

MR R.—Oh, it acted as a kind of "cold pig;" aroused us from our sentimental lethargy. If we hadn't been aroused, I verily believe India would now be ruled by her own princes, or by another European power. But yes; we woke up at the last moment, made a spasmodic effort in simple self-defence, and then commenced snoring again.

Remorse and generous imbecility characterise our present policy; though "policy" is no name for hand-to-mouth expediency.

ALLEN.—But, pray, who are the people who feel remorse for having conquered India?

MR R.—Every one. At least only an insignificant section expresses the feeling, but all sections act as if they had it, and I judge them by their actions, just as I should judge a single individual in any of the ordinary affairs of life. We act, then, as if we felt the greatest remorse for our immoral conquest, but nevertheless make a show of persistence in enjoying the fruits of that conquest. At the present rate, I believe, we are not more than twenty years from seeing the *reductio ad absurdum* of our want of method. On the one hand, in earnest of our remorse, we force upon them

a spurious kind of liberty which does us no good. We educate the natives according to a standard only suited for a highly civilised race, thus teaching them to run before they can walk; we encourage, almost incite them, to litigate; and we allow their press to talk treason, which even in Ireland would not be considered so ridiculous as to be harmless. In short, while we profess to be training them to see the advantages of our rule, we are really only training them to be discontented, and to take the law into their own hands. It is like knocking a man down, and then putting your hands behind your back, and telling him where he can find a stick.

Well, so much for remorse on the one hand. That concerns the sentimental, the moral, fruits of conquest. On the other hand as to the material fruits, the remorseful

policy has only been saved from appearing evidently absurd, by the fact that one most precarious source of revenue has chanced to counterbalance all the remissions of taxation which, owing to sentimental pressure, have from time to time been made. The opium revenue has been allowed to increase steadily. I suppose this is because a free indulgence in no matter what stimulant is regarded as part of the liberty of the subject; still it is rather amusing that those who are so ready to harass their own countrymen in the free enjoyment of tolerably good beer, should not have made more vigorous attacks on the right of their interesting fellow-subjects to consume to excess an undoubtedly pernicious drug. It's like the unaccountable love, founded on fear, which the radical feels for the despot. However, the cry will some day be raised

more successfully; or we shall allow China to impose a heavy import duty on our opium; and then the Government of the day, through their Viceroy, will incur hatred (at home, mind you, and not in India), by having to revert to the imposition of some tax which has professedly been thrown off for ever.

ALLEN.—I think you said India ought to be governed by practical men upon the spot. But don't you think our sentimental friends, when they once are on the spot, become pretty practical, and forget all about sentiment?

MR R.—Certainly; they soon have to sift their principles from their emotions. Lord Macaulay was an amusing instance of that. He was eloquent on the side of sentiment so long as his eloquence was irresponsible; but the experience of office made

him silent in no time, and he must have found his former disciples at home a source of some embarrassment. It's just the same now. Irresponsible persons at home talk on with aggressive ignorance on the remorseful side, speaking of "the teeming masses of swarthy fellow-subjects," "mild Hindoos," "intelligent highlanders," "sturdy yeomen," "hardy and frugal peasants," "dissipated young nobles," "accomplished native ladies," &c., &c., as if they were all living together, and going to church every Sunday.

ALLEN. — Talking of church, by the by, do you think there is any progress being made in converting the natives to Christianity?

MR R. — Very little. Figures may show that there is; but then I could show by figures that the whole of England was going over to Rome. If we all

led lives in accordance with the doctrines we profess to follow, I have no doubt that we should proselytise at a wonderful rate; but as we don't, and as the natives are in their own way infinitely more consistent, they say—"You none of you practise what you preach except a few missionaries, who do not seem any the more comfortable in consequence; and therefore, although the temptation to drink brandy is certainly considerable, we prefer to remain as we are."

From the various observations Mr Ratcliff had made, I felt some curiosity to hear his political views on home and general subjects; for it occurred to me that with all his indignation against home politicians meddling with Indian affairs, he himself, though he had been chiefly schooled in India, might yet hold very decided opinions as to purely English questions of policy. I

therefore sounded him once or twice, but could not at all catch in his answers any of those familiar phrases which at once reveal the party enthusiast. I therefore asked him plainly one day "whether he was a Whig or a Tory?"

To which he replied "that he was neither one nor the other; but belonged to a party then existing only in the future —namely, '*The Party of Common-sense.*'"

"There is no question," said Mr Ratcliff, "no question in the world, that cannot or should not be decided by common-sense; and those statesmen who possess and display the largest share of that quality, nearly always obtain a proportionate amount of honour and applause in their careers."

"Then I hope to see you stand for Parliament yourself," said I, "on the principles of Common-sense and No Party."

"Whenever I do stand," said Mr Ratcliff, "I shall take particular care not to be so foolish."

When Mr Ratcliff and I reached Brindisi, we continued our homeward journey together as far as Turin, and there separated, having each formed a friendship that proved to be sincere. I hastened on at once to Paris and Calais, and thence, in due course, arrived again in my native country.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE letter I had last received from my father was undated, and contained no clue as to the exact place from which it had been written. I saw, however, that the envelope bore the postmark of the City, a fact which I considered ominous of evil. Under these circumstances, therefore, I decided to go home in the first instance; and then if I failed to find my father there, or to ascertain precisely what had befallen him, I meant to see Helena Chobham—for I knew where she was to be found—and hear the bad news from

her. I felt that she would best know how to communicate any such intelligence to me.

On reaching Hare Place, I experienced a most disagreeable surprise in finding that it was occupied by strangers. The lodge at which I entered was tenanted by an old woman whom our family had regularly supported in former times. She either could not or would not recognise me, but told me, in answer to my questions, that a certain Alderman Taylor was in possession of the house.

On hearing this I paused, and considered whether I should still go up to the house, or whether I should further examine the woman. Just then, however, an old gentleman with a straw hat on his head and a long spud in his hand appeared, coming in the direction of the lodge;

upon seeing whom, the woman told me that that was the alderman, if I wanted him.

I at once went to meet him, and as soon as I was within a little distance of him he called out, "Good afternoon. Are you looking for the house? Mrs Taylor is at home, I know."

I told him my name and who I was, upon which he exhibited both astonishment and distress. I told him that I had only that day landed in England, and that I was anxious to see my father.

"You haven't seen him yet?" asked the alderman in astonishment.

"No," answered I; "can you tell me where he is at present?"

The alderman was silent for a few moments, and then said: "I can tell you one thing—he's looking uncommonly well.

I had the pleasure of seeing him on business the other day."

We were now walking rather rapidly towards the house, the old gentleman leading the way. I began asking him some further questions, but he immediately said, "I think we'd better step into the study and have a chat."

Having arrived in the study, the alderman took his seat at a desk, and having then assumed a kind, though rather magisterial air, inquired at what date I had left India.

I told him; upon which he said, "Excuse my asking you the question, but did not you start for home on account of what you'd heard respecting the bank?"

"What bank?" I asked him.

"The Wolvenden Joint-Stock Bank," said he. "You have heard they have stopped payment, I presume?"

"No, I haven't heard anything," answered I. "The fact is, I was away on leave in a very out-of-the-way place, and didn't hear any news."

"But you knew, of course," said the alderman, "that your father had a connection with the bank?"

"I knew he used to have an account there," said I, thinking I had now heard the worst.

"He was a director, my dear sir," exclaimed the alderman; "and all the directors have been arrested and committed for trial!"

I was stupefied with horror, and when I attempted to repeat "committed for trial," I could only frame the words with my lips.

The alderman seemed rather overcome himself, for his voice faltered as he said,

"No doubt a gentleman of his social position will have no difficulty in getting bail."

"He's in prison then?" said I.

The old alderman answered, "In Newgate, at present, I'm afraid."

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